WE WERE GOING OVER THE BAR

CASTAWAY ISLAND

By PERRY NEWBERRY

Illustrated by
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Castaway Island

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To

my youthful nephew, Smith, in the hope that the adventures of his coming years may all have happy solutions, this book is dedicated

Introduction

UP to a very short time ago, the Galapagos Islands were little known and were considered of value and interest only to scientists. Then, with the opening of the Panama Canal, their position in the Pacific gave them importance, and Ecuador, to whom they belong, sent over a governor and a colony to Charles Island, or as the Spanish named it, Santa Maria.

So it must have been prior to that when our hero and his friend found refuge from their tiny raft upon this island, and the dogs and horses and cattle must have been left there by the settlement of General Villanil, who in 1832 founded the colony of Floreana there, naming it after the president of Ecuador, Juan Jose Flores. This settlement lasted but a few years, the men going back to Ecuador; but they left their cattle and goats, horses and sheep, dogs and cats to run wild over the hills and in the forests.

But over on Chatham Island, which also has a Spanish name, San Cristobal, there has been for many years a convict settlement, a kind of open-air prison, and the governor of Chatham Island has an army. Once, when a schooner with scientists stopped at Chatham Island, the governor asked the captain of the

ship if he would carry his army across to one of the near-by islands, and the captain, desiring to accommodate him, asked how many trips it would take the schooner. "My army is six strong," declared the governor, proudly.

In 1903, according to the official census of Ecuador, there were 400 people on Chatham Island—principally convicts—115 on Albemarle, known also as Isabela, and three on Charles Island. Throughout the rest of the islands and islets of the group—and there are five large islands and ten smaller ones—there were about a thousand people.

Unlike most other lands, there never has been a native population of aborigines or Indians. When first discovered early in the sixteenth century by the Spaniards, they were entirely uninhabited. The Spanish navigators named them the Galapagos, because of the huge land tortoises they found upon them, Galapago meaning tortoise in Spanish ; and gave the individual islands their Spanish names, Isabela, Fernandina, Santa Cruz, San Cristobal, San Salvador and Santa Maria. Then, a little later, English buccaneers or privateers—they were a great deal alike in those days—found the islands and named them all over again : Albemarle, Narborough, Indefatigable, Chatham, James and Charles. One of these bold seamen, Hugh Liborges, made a map of the group, a rough, unfinished drawing, and for many years that map was all that Englishmen knew of the Galapagos group.

Liborges' map, shown at page 300, is very rudimentary. The map at page 95 is, in its general outline and main details, based upon late surveys of Charles Island.

For scientists, the Galapagos Islands have always had a deep interest since Charles Darwin the great English naturalist visited them aboard the "Beagle" in 1836 and wrote of their strange flowers, birds and reptiles in his "Journal of a Naturalist." There are many birds, flowers, lizards and the giant tortoises, which are found in no other spot on earth and must be studied there to learn their habits. So the islands have been and are now visited quite often by ships bearing scientific expeditions from various countries, and the first interest is in the mammoth tortoises. One was measured fifty-six inches long on its upper shell, and the long neck and legs made it much larger. Nowhere else have such monsters been found, and even those of the Galapagos are rapidly becoming extinct.

Although right under the equator, the islands are not so warm of climate as this would indicate, for sea breezes and currents cool the rays of the sun, and in the higher altitudes—for there are quite lofty mountains on the larger islands,—the weather is usually pleasant. The year is divided into wet and dry seasons, and, of course, there is no snow.

So, if one had to be shipwrecked and find a Castaway Island, it would be difficult to discover one in these modern times better adapted to a new Robinson Crusoe than Charles Island—or Santa Maria, if you prefer the

Introduction

Spanish name—of the Galapagos group; and all that is told of the happenings on Castaway Island in the following pages might have happened on Charles Island.

THE AUTHOR.

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Castaway Island

CASTAWAY ISLAND

CHAPTER I

I FIND A FRIEND

THEY had buried my mother that day. In the little graveyard back of the American consulate, over which floated the stars and stripes, they had laid her away in a foreign soil, and I had found a hidden bench in the Plaza where I might sob away my grief. I was a small, sorrowing stranger in a city whose people spoke a different language and were of different customs and manners.

Except for the trained nurse who had made the journey from San Francisco with my invalid mother, I knew no one in Guayaquil. The American consul, who had offered to read services and say a prayer at the

burial, appeared to me almost as foreign as the native Ecuadorans, and although I do not doubt his kindliness of heart, an equatorial sun and South American associations had made him an alien in looks and feelings.

I was alone among strangers. Grief at the loss of the one parent I had known, the mother who had been all in all to me, was intensified by this loneliness, and the hotel, where dark-skinned men and black-haired women talked words I could not understand, became unendurable to me. I ran away to the park beside the bay, where I might look out across the water toward my own home land. The park was deserted at this noon hour of siesta. The grass plots, watered by revolving sprays, steamed in the heat of the tropic sun, and the white roads and pathways reflected back its glaring rays. Finding a bench half shaded by a palm tree and screened from view by a fringe of cacti, I threw myself down, face in my arms, and wept.

I was aroused by a greeting in Spanish, a question that I did not understand, for I knew nothing of the language, and looked up through my tears to find a man standing before the bench; a man who was big and tall and the strangest figure that I had seen in all this strange land. It was not any oddity of face, which seemed kindly despite a heavy dark beard and a great sweeping mustache, with a complexion of sun-tanned brown and eyes that twinkled with humor; but he was costumed like a pirate or brigand in a story. Upon his

head, over curly hair, was a tattered straw sombrero, and his coat, ragged and torn, was a blue mess-jacket, such as I had seen upon soldiers about the hotel, but very much older and worse for wear. His trousers were of once white flannel and his feet were bare, except for queer, strapped sandals.

But his armament was oddest. He stood there leaning upon a staff which was longer than himself, and he must have been well over six feet; a peeled sapling of some dark wood, worn smooth with much handling, its smaller end steel-pointed for a foot of its length. Although he evidently used it as a staff, it was a fierce-looking weapon for any Zulu chief. But it was the least important of this man's armory.

In contrast to the dirtiness and ragged condition of his clothes was a bright, shiningly clean rifle which hung, muzzle down, from his shoulder, and a short, straight sword in scabbard at his side. About his waist was a belt filled with cartridges, and it supported a heavy revolver in its holster. There was the handle of a knife protruding from another sheath on his belt, but its effect was offset by the ends of fork and spoon which indicated culinary, rather than warlike uses.

Again he spoke to me in Spanish and I shook my head to indicate that I could not understand. Sad as I was, there was something in his face and voice that made me wish I might comprehend him, could talk with him and make him my friend. I certainly needed a friend.

He turned to go, then suddenly faced me with a smile of such geniality that I could not but respond.

"You—you're not American?" he asked. Then, "No such luck!"

"But I am," I answered quickly, jumping from the seat. "Of course I'm American."

"Well, by jiminetty!" he exclaimed. "United States—and crying his heart out here in an Ecuadoran plaza. Why, boy, I'm U. S. myself!"

"I'm glad ——"

"Shake!" he interrupted, taking my hand into his great one. I felt the warmth of friendship go through me at the clasp. "Proud to know you, boy." He straightened up to full height and brought his heels together. "I am Stimson—Jeffers Stimson, late of the Presidente's Guard, formerly of Saginaw, Michigan, U. S. A."

"I am Robert Trevlin of San Francisco," I said in turn, and again he shook my hand and gave a happy laugh.

"And I know that town, too, almost as well as Saginaw—from the Ferry to Twin Peaks and from Fisherman's Wharf to the Potrero. Where do you live?"

"On Pierce Street—or we did. I suppose I do yet. I don't know." The question had brought remembrance of my loss; all my life I had lived with my mother in this San Francisco home. Now she who had made it a home was gone. Tears that I could not hold back welled up to my eyes.

I Find a Friend

Jeffers Stimson drew me down on the bench beside him, a strong arm across my shoulders. "The mother gone?" he asked, softly, and at my nod, he pulled me close against him, saying no more for a time. Then, when I had calmed my sobs, he spoke to me gently, asking me questions of her and myself, learning without seeming inquisitiveness how alone I was in Guayaquil, how much I was in need of a friend. "Now, what are your plans?" he asked, at last.

"I have made none," I replied. "It all happened so suddenly, and I have been so sad. Then, this morning, Mrs. Miller—she was mother's nurse—told me she would stay down here. She has a good position offered in the government hospital."

"You'll go back to San Francisco?"

"I have relatives there—Aunt Mary and Uncle Jim. Mother told me to go there to them."

"They'll kind of help you to get used to it. I'm going to Frisco, too, just as soon as I get a decent rig-out." He glanced down at his ragged clothes. "When does the next steamer sail?"

"In four days."

"What boat?"

"The 'Mariposa.'"

Stimson scratched his curly hair thoughtfully. "I suppose I might go up on her," he said, at last, "though I had figured on getting away on some steam schooner, and work my way by stevedoring or shoveling coal. Somehow"—he smiled cheerily,—"I hate to

waste good money paying fares. You wouldn't want to come with me?"

I thought it over a minute before replying. I knew that my mother's death had left me rich, and I had experience enough in my sixteen years of life to realize that heaving coal in the boiler room of a coasting schooner was not what my relatives would expect of me. I could see Aunt Mary hold up her hands in horror of the idea, and Uncle Jim, immaculate in creased trousers and white vest, cry with a shudder, "Impossible! Not for a Trevlin!" But still I thought it over.

"Could I do the work?" I asked, at length.

Stimson felt my biceps, then laid a hand hard on my chest. "Take a good, full breathe-in," he commanded. "That's it. Plenty of lung room there. You haven't consumption, sure. You will do, though you're not in prime condition; just a bit soft."

"You think we could find jobs?"

"Not a doubt. They are always looking for strong men willing to work in these South American ports. Is it a go?"

"Yes," I replied, deciding quickly. "If you are willing to take on a boy and a green hand. I do not know how to do a thing and, maybe, I shall be nothing but a nuisance; but if you really want me, I will go with you."

"Settled then," said Stimson, grasping my hand again. "Where are you stopping here?"

"At the Planters' Hotel."

"I'll make that my headquarters. I've just hiked in from Quito and haven't placed myself yet. Suppose we walk up there now—or perhaps I had better go ahead alone. I'm hardly fit to be seen, in these ragged regimentals."

"I don't mind, sir," I cried eagerly. "We will go together and you won't need to get a room. Share mine."

"Thanks, Robert, but I'll find my own bunk for the few days I'm here." We started across the Plaza as he continued: "I'm far from being broke, although I certainly have all the appearances. You see I've nine hundred dollars Mex. in my belt, worth just about half that north of the Rio Grande. It is the savings from three years of fighting and waiting for fighting in this great, little republic of Ecuador. It came hard, and getting it paid wasn't the easiest part, either." He laughed at the recollection.

At the Plaza gate, the trim, gold-laced civil guard came to quick attention at sight of my ragged friend and gravely saluted, Stimson making answer by a touch of his finger to his ragged hat brim. I might have believed it a humorous whim of the guard, had not an officer on horseback, laden with epaulets and trappings, brought his hand up sharply to his chapeau as he passed us. Again Stimson replied with a careless salute, never pausing in his talk or seeming to notice these signs of respect, so incongruous with his ap-

pearance. When we entered the office of the Planters', two soldiers at one of the little tables jumped hurriedly from their chairs, standing at attention, hands to caps, as we passed in. I had seen enough of Ecuadoran military etiquette to feel certain that no ordinary soldier was entitled to such attention, and this new friend of mine gave me food for thought. Dressed like one of Captain Kidd's pirate crew, armed like a bandit, believing four hundred and fifty dollars, a life's saving, was a fortune and ready to work in a boiler-room to save steamer fare, he was saluted with greatest respect by the city's military police and the officers of the army. It was confusing.

I left him in the office while I sought out Mrs. Miller to tell her of my new friend, and I went to our apartments convinced that these incongruities would settle themselves in time. I would not question him, but wait for his confidence. Gladly would I have paid his steamer fare to San Francisco for the sake of his companionship, but somehow I knew that the offer must not be made to this ragged soldier of fortune, who believed himself rich in worldly goods and thought me the poor and dependent one. I must leave him in that belief and accept his proffered friendship, needing it so greatly, on his own terms.

Mrs. Miller had packed my mother's effects to be shipped home and was waiting for me that we might arrange final plans. She was surprised at the change in my looks and manners in the short time of my

absence, for I had left her after the funeral, prostrated with grief. Eagerly I told her of my new friend and his offer to take me back to San Francisco, and I was alive with energy and enthusiasm.

"I must see him before I decide so important a matter," she answered, and my heart sank at the remembrance of Stimson's unprepossessing appearance. She would never permit me to leave with him, even in regular manner on the "Mariposa."

"We shall meet him at dinner," I said, but I was certain she would not approve. She would see the rough clothes and uncouth guise of my friend and never find the kind heart behind them. She might even refuse me further acquaintance with him and while she had no real authority over me, I should hate to disobey her. She had been a kind friend as well as loyal nurse to my mother, and until word came in answer to our telegram to my uncle, she would remain my protector. That no answer had yet come was not so strange in this country of careless methods; the wires might be down or some operator on the line oversleeping his siesta.

We went down to the great dining-room, filled with heavy perfumes of many tropic flowers, a little before the time set for meeting Stimson, but I looked anxiously around the tables of the café as we entered. The room was well filled, but I saw no sign of my friend as we followed the bowing head waiter across to our table. Then I heard his voice.

"Robert?" he called, softly.

I turned quickly, but even then I did not recognize him until he came to me. It was Stimson, but so different a Stimson, with hair trimmed, beard and mustache gone, and clothed in a neat suit of flannels; only the great height and massive frame remaining of the ragged man of the Plaza. I looked at him in amazement, too surprised for words.

"Don't you know me, Rob?" he laughed, and I recovered my wits to introduce him to Mrs. Miller, my fears all gone. I had never doubted that he was a gentleman, but now he looked a gentleman.

"I am glad that Robert has found you to be his friend," said Mrs. Miller, inviting him to a seat at our table.

"I thank you," he replied, "but I have a friend with me now"—he motioned to a near-by table. "May I join you later—at coffee?"

He left us with Mrs. Miller's permission, and I saw him take the chair beside an officer in the uniform of one of the Presidente's household. While we ate, both Mrs. Miller and I cast glances that way, to find Stimson smiling amiably always and the officer evidently urging, talking low but excitedly.

"You did not tell me that Mr. Stimson was an officer," Mrs. Miller said, speaking low that he might not hear.

"Is he that?" I asked.

"Of importance, evidently," she returned. "The

gentleman with him is very high in the Presidente's council. Your new friend is a man of position in Ecuador."

I smiled as I thought what a difference a few clothes made and was glad I had not told Mrs. Miller the extent of Stimson's fortune. In a few minutes he joined us, while his companion made a low bowing exit from the café. He took a chair between us while a waiter brought him coffee.

"It seems good to talk U. S. again," he said, smiling happily. "For the last three years I have seen so few of my countrymen that I might easily have forgotten the language. Has Robert told you we are going partners on the up-trip?"

"Yes. I suppose you sail on the 'Mariposa'?"

Stimson glanced at me. "Well, no," he replied. "I think we'll probably find some boat leaving sooner —a coaster, perhaps," and at her satisfied smile, he changed the subject and it was not referred to again Mrs. Miller was pleased with him, glad that I had found a congenial friend of such good appearance and evident respectability, and before we had left the table, was convinced that she had provided well for my safety and happiness.

CHAPTER II

THE BIG WIND

I WALKED beside Stimson to the quays next morning and on the way we determined the manner of our homeward trip. "We'll settle between ourselves just what we are willing to do for a free ride to the States," he said, "then hunt for that. A job in the engine room, stoking coal, wouldn't go badly with me, but it would probably break your back. On the other hand, you are light on your feet and would be of real use on a sailing ship. So let's decide for the sails."

"Very well," I replied, although I doubted my value even with sails.

"It will take longer to make port," continued Stimson. "Are you in a hurry?"

"Not a bit."

"Nor I; a week or a month don't matter. So we'll sail up and enjoy the cruise. Is it settled?"

"Settled, Captain," I replied.

He looked at me sharply. "Better not call me captain aboard ship," he said, smiling. "Jeffers or just Jeff would sound better and provoke less argument."

"Excuse me," I said hastily. "It just slipped out. I knew from the salutes you were an officer."

He said nothing for a minute, glancing over the harbor where several ships lay anchored or tied against the docks. When he did speak it was of them. "She's a Swedish brig," he remarked, pointing at a square-rigged vessel pulling at its chain as though anxious to get away. "She'll be bound south for the Straits when she sails, homeward bound. Yes, Rob, I am, or was, an officer."

"I knew that," I repeated.

"I've resigned; just quit." He raised his arm to indicate another ship far out in the gulf. "The three master yonder is a whaler, American, I judge, provisioning or looking for men. None of that in mine, thank you! Prison is better than a whaler, generally speaking. We won't tackle the whaler for jobs."

"What's the boat beside the sea-wall?"

"A schooner and U. S. Maybe loading for Frisco. We'll find out. Robert ——" he placed a hand on my arm. "I suppose you sometimes think you'd like to be a soldier?"

I nodded. I had, often.

"There's just one good excuse for it," continued Stimson, "and that's when the flag floating from the

stern of that schooner is in danger. I know, for I've fought under other flags and found it was only another name for butchery."

"You were a captain?" I asked eagerly.

"I was leader of a regiment of ragged fighters they called the rag-bag brigade, because we spent all our clothing allowance for ammunition." Stimson smiled as he headed me down the wharves toward the schooner. "They weren't much to look at, as you who saw me yesterday might guess, but they could fight! They were honest men, too, fighting under their flag for what they believed was right. I was the crooked one of the regiment, for I fought for pay and excitement. But I'm through with it—forever."

"Who was the man last night—at dinner?" I asked the question without thought of impertinence, and Stimson smiled as he answered.

"The Presidente wants me to stay, and they have offered me higher command with better pay to take charge of his guard. He was urging my acceptance."

We had approached the schooner, which proved to be the "Sally B" of San Francisco, as we could read on her counter, but there was no one in sight on her decks, and Stimson asked a driver of one of the wagons hauling cargo to load her where her captain might be found. The conversation was in Spanish and Stimson's "Come on, lad," at its conclusion was the first word I could understand. I followed him across the quay to the street which overlooked the Embarcadero.

"Somewhere in one of these cafés," explained Stimson, "is Captain McCloud of the noble schooner 'Sally B.' She is supposed to be loading for Frisco and he is supposed to be overseeing it; but neither is happening. He has caught the *mañana* habit of the southlands, where they never do to-day what may be put off till to-morrow, and his crew has the same disease. It kind of looks as though he needs us."

After some search and numerous inquiries, we found Captain McCloud at a table in the shade of an awning in front of a café with a tall glass in front of him. He looked cool and placid, as though there were no troubles in the world and the lading of the "Sally B" was a matter of no consequence. From his chair, he could see the piles of cargo from the emptying wagons grow higher with each load and the lines, swinging loose from the schooner's hoist, unworked, indicating that his crew was idle.

"Morning, Captain," Stimson greeted. "Want to hire two huskies to put your cargo aboard?"

Captain McCloud looked him over carefully from head to feet, then shifted his eyes to me in a shorter survey. "States?" he asked, gruffly.

"Yes, and want to get back," replied Stimson.

"Good enough. No place in the world like the States. Grand country," grunted the captain. "That crew of mine is drunk—all drunk. Pigs—just five drunken pigs! I've had Lascars and coolies, Fijians and Kanakas, but these are the worst ever! Work? They don't

know what work is! You want to earn your way to San Francisco?"

"Yes."

"All right—all right; good enough. Glad to find white men that can work. And the lad?"

"The two of us," said Stimson. "We go together. He's strong, active and able."

"All right; good enough. Know anything about lading?"

"Me, yes; I've sailed and stevedored. The boy's green."

"All right. Could ye take charge of the lading there? What with the heat and trying to handle five mescal-lined, drink-absorbing human pigs, I'm about done up."

"I'll take on the job and make that crew of yours work if there's an ounce of life left in them," said Stimson, grimly. "But it's understood that the lad and I get passage and cabin fare to San Francisco."

"All right; all right; good enough. All understood and agreed. I'll rest here till the cargo's in. We'll sail with the tide in the morning if she's laden. What's your name?"

"Stimson."

"Not ——?"

"Yes, Jeff Stimson. And this is Rob Trevlin."

Captain McCloud came to his feet with exaggerated dignity. "I'm proud to meet you, Capitaine," he said, holding out an unsteady hand to Stimson, which he

shook briefly. "I've heard a good deal of you, hereaways. Proud to have you aboard."

"Thanks. Come, Bob," and Stimson led me back to the wharf, while the captain returned to the contemplation of his tall glass, muttering "All rights" and "Good enoughs" at the hot and empty air. We, newly engaged stevedores, made our way through the piles of cargo and jumped easily to the deck of the "Sally B." There was no one in sight. The schooner was flush-decked, with a small cabin aft and a large fo'castle with a galley at her bows, but there was none of the crew in any of these, although there were indications of their occupancy of the fo'castle. Several empty bottles and blankets from the hammocks littered the floor.

"They have probably made off for town where there is more of this stuff," said Stimson, kicking a bottle. "The captain sets the example and the crew follows his lead. It seems as though we had struck a pretty rough boat for homeward-bound, Bob."

"You think it will be safe?" I asked.

"Safe enough, yes. They'll sober up when we get to sea and we can handle her until they do get sober. I've seen this same kind of lugger; all hands drunk ashore, brisk enough when sailing."

Stimson pushed the cover, already loosened, from the midships hatch and motioned me to look below. In the empty hold amid loose straw lay five Ecuadorans. That there might be no mistake about their con-

dition, several empty gin bottles lay with them. Stimson surveyed them with an expression of extreme disgust.

"Throw me that hoist-line," he cried to me, dropping into the hold and I obeyed, guessing correctly at the unfamiliar term. "Now, Bob, when I give the word, hoist away. We'll jerk Captain McCloud's crew out of our way, at least. Haul away!"

I threw my weight on the down-pull and was surprised at the ease with which the sailor came up through the hatch. The combination of pulleys gave me an immense advantage of strength, and I held him sprawling in air while Stimson climbed up from below. He was chuckling gleefully.

"Sea bathing is what he needs for his disease," he laughed, swinging the inert human bundle out over the side. "Salt water immersion will probably cure him. Let her go, Bob."

I dropped the rope and down ran the body, making a great splash as it struck the water. After a few seconds, Stimson hauled in until the sailor's feet were high in air, and again let him go. Five times he ducked the man, and it was only after the fourth time that there was evidence of life; then he came out, gasping and choking and feebly kicking his legs about. After the fifth immersion, he yelled loudly for mercy, and we swung him in on deck.

No sooner had Stimson untied him than he sprang with Spanish curses to his feet and whipped out a clasp-knife which seemed to open by itself as he drew

it. Then he crouched as though to spring on the big American, but Stimson did not wait for the attack. He ran in, striking from the shoulder, his big fist tight clenched, and the Ecuadoran went down with a groan. I picked up the knife, which had flown half-way across deck and, trembling all over with the suddenness and fury of the assault, handed it to Stimson.

"Too bad, Bob," he said with a comforting smile, quiet and cheerful. "I don't like to be rough, but he would have it. Sprinkle him with a cupful of water from the butt by the fo'mast."

I did and the sailor came to with the splash of it on his face. Stimson, standing over him, spoke sternly to him in Spanish and he slouched, befuddled but obedient, into the hold and attached the line about the body of another of the crew. One by one we hauled them out and soused them into soberness. Some required but the one ducking, others several, but it was an efficacious remedy in every instance, and before noon siesta five able seamen were assisting in the lading of the "Sally B." There were no other symptoms of mutiny among them; the man who had first attempted defiance of Stimson's authority had evidently advised against a repetition of the experience.

The cargo was principally olive oil in barrels, which were rolled upon a net on the dock, then hoisted aboard by the crane and lowered into the hold. I checked off from the manifest as each barrel came over the side, and I rolled them into place below decks, and when Cap-

tain McCloud came grunting down the quay late in the afternoon, he could not but approve the progress we had made. By six o'clock all cargo was aboard and we began on the stores, a lighter job which was finished in an hour. At McCloud's suggestion, Stimson got up sail and worked the schooner a mile or more into the gulf, where we dropped a light anchor, McCloud disappearing again in the direction of his café and tall glass.

Stimson and I pulled ashore in the tender, leaving the crew safely aboard the schooner, which Stimson was certain from investigation was barren of any liquors, and we walked together to the hotel for dinner. I was dead tired from the hardest day's work I had ever done, but it was a good, wholesome tired feeling, and I had not had a minute all day to brood over my grief. After a hearty meal, I felt much refreshed and, arranging to have my trunks forwarded on the "Mariposa," settled my bill at the hotel and joined Stimson with only a small bundle of the things I should need aboard the schooner.

He glanced at the meagre bundle and smiled, holding out a similar package tied at the end of his great staff. "That with my war utensils constitutes my household goods," he said. "I'm leaving Ecuador with the same size bundle as I brought into the country, though I've considerably more cash about me, so should be satisfied. Suppose we walk down to the front and take a parting look at Guayaquil by gas-light."

We had plenty of time, so strolled leisurely past the

Plaza where we had first met, now lively with a gay throng of promenaders keeping unconscious step with the music of a band amid the palms, and wandered out through broad streets whose shops, brilliantly lighted, swarmed with Spanish men and women. It was the busy time of Ecuador's day, and the population which had dodged tropic sun rays was making up for lost time. It seemed a happy, hearty people, inclined to merriment and music, soft chatter and smiles. Here and there were tinkling guitars and dancers often used the hard pavements in lieu of ballroom floors.

We had finally come out on the Embarcadero when I saw two men dodge hurriedly into a café and believed I recognized, in the hasty glance I had of them, members of the "Sally B's" crew.

"Stimson," I cried, clutching his arm, "did you see those men?"

"No," he answered, stopping short. "Why?"

"They were—I am almost sure they were from the ship."

"The schooner? Hardly, Bob. They wouldn't swim ashore." He started on, then stopped again. "However, we'll see."

We pushed through the screen doors into the café I had seen them enter. There were many men, many sailors sitting about the tables, but no one from the "Sally B." "I must have been mistaken," I confessed, and we made our way to the quay.

Stimson's instructions were to await Captain McCloud

with the tender and take him aboard, so we sat down at the edge of the stone wharf and waited his arrival. It was an intensely warm night, even for Guayaquil. No breath of air stirred here at the water's edge and the stars above us looked close and big, as though they too radiated heat. It was a sultry atmosphere and I was sleepy.

"Coil up on the stern thwarts there," commanded Stimson, pointing to the boat, "and take a nap. I'll look out for the captain and wake you when he comes."

I was only too willing to obey him and in a minute was far away in dreams to be brought back by his exclamation, "I'll be jiggered!" I jumped to my feet in time to see the captain navigating a very crooked course down the quay. "Drunk!" muttered Stimson, but he hurried to meet him and assisted him into the boat, pulling away at once to the schooner. We could see her riding lights swaying gently in the wash of the gulf, and were soon aboard, Stimson helping the captain into his cabin and boosting him into his berth.

He rejoined me in a few minutes with a pair of blankets and made us up beds on deck at the stern. "It doesn't look much like sailing out with the early tide," I heard Stimson say to me, but I was too sleepy to either reply or care. That was my last recollection, that and vivid stars bright and close above me, the Southern Cross. I awoke in a deluge of water, crushed by a great weight and hurled, all crumpled up, against the stern bulwarks. I was so wrapped and twisted in my blanket

that I could not move arm or leg. Helpless I lay while wave after wave swept over me, almost drowning me each time, pounding me back and forth against the bulwarks.

"Bob!" I heard Stimson call, and somehow I answered him. In another moment he was beside me and had lifted my head above the rush of the water. "Hang on to me tight, lad—hold hard now," he shouted in my ear. I could not hold hard or hold at all. I was like a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes or a mummy in its yards of cloth, helpless. Another sea came over us, the "Sally B" heeled to port and together we rolled to the rail. Stimson kept firm hold of my blanket and with his other hand grasped the mainstay. So holding, he rose to his feet and lifted me above the water that swept over the side.

"Hurt, Bob?" he asked in an anxious shout above the shriek of the tempest.

"No," I howled back. "Get me free of these blankets and give me a chance!"

I heard him laugh, but he pulled away the enfolding blanket. With release of my limbs, I lost that horrible suffocating fear of helplessness and might have broken into a merry jig had not another fierce wave broke quartering, sending a deluge of water down upon us that would have carried me with it had not Stimson held me close against him. Then the schooner, its bow swinging closer into the wind, righted somewhat and we made a dash for the after hatch.

"All hands on deck! All hands!" came a roar from behind us that made the hurricane seem tame. "Up, ye rum-soaked Greasers! On deck with ye, or go down to the bottom!" Captain McCloud was at last on the job.

He caught sight of us at once, just as we were ready to leap down the cabin hatch. "Keep above, ye fools!" he shouted. "H'ist the jib, or the 'Sally' will capsize the next squall! Where's the men?"

"Haven't seen any," howled Stimson back at him.

"Drunk, as usual! Lend a hand here and we'll get a rag for'd so we can run for it. You, lad, to the wheel and hard alee. Mate, lay on the jib halliards."

The captain was none too sober himself, as I could see as he and Stimson made for the foremast to hoist the jib. The schooner's deck was at almost every angle as she pitched and rolled, but she was not taking water aboard as she had at first and I reached the wheel without being battered to the rail. I had no idea what hard alee meant or even how to handle the wheel, but I grasped hold of it with both hands and began revolving it to right. "Port! Port, you lubber!" shouted the captain, so perceiving that I was wrong in my guess, I reversed the process and pushed hard down with all the strength of my arms and weight of my body.

The darkness of the night, all the stars hidden beneath the canopy of black clouds, was relieved by a white radiance from the spume of the breaking waves. I am not sure they shed a light; it may have been

IT WAS BUCKING LIKE A LIVE THING

reflected glow, but to me they seemed phosphorescent as they towered and broke around us. It was an eerie light, strangely white and shadowless, and by it I could see Stimson and the captain forward, Stimson at the halliards, the captain on the sprit loosening the jib. Then there was a flutter of white sail and a crack like a gun shot as the wind caught it and drove it taut. "Haul there, blast ye! Haul away!" I heard the captain shout at Stimson, and they were his last words. I did not see him go overboard. I was too busy holding the wheel alee, for it was bucking like a live thing, trying to break away from me.

Stimson told me of it afterward, how Captain McCloud started for the foremast just as the schooner swung into the trough of the wave, lying over almost to her scuppers, and leaped to catch the spar just as a great wave broke over the boat, catching him in mid-air. His feet never touched the deck.

The jib held. It was the only piece of new canvas on the old schooner or it never would have stood the strain. Just that one sea we took aboard as we swung around to race with the tempest, and the next minute we were before the wind with the breaking billows chasing us.

"Bob," cried Stimson, jumping down beside me and taking the wheel, "isn't this a night? Are you alive after it all?"

"Alive?" I answered. "I'm as good as ever I was, but what's the matter with this ocean?"

"Matter enough, Robin boy! It's a tornado, cyclone, hurricane, typhoon and monsoon, all blown into one! It's the big wind of Ireland just struck little old Ecuador!"

"Where is it blowing us?"

"Boreas only knows!" He glanced at the compass before him. "We're heading a little north of west, and that means we're leaving the Gulf of Guayaquil behind us at a pace somewhat between those of a coyote and an express train."

I looked to stern and saw great waves rolling up on us, seemingly to crush us. The wind fairly shrieked through the ropes and rigging and the sky was like ink. It was a terrifying time, and I cowered down beside Stimson.

"Don't look back, Bob, and don't get frightened," my big friend commanded. "Many a strong sailor has gone wrong at a time like this and deserted his wheel, just by looking astern. Those waves are not going to catch us, lad."

I hoped they would not, but I was bruised and tired and badly scared, and I was only sixteen years old. I grasped the spokes of the wheel beside Stimson and tried to be brave, but I could not forget those black mountains of water with angry fringe of white atop, chasing behind us. Stimson talked to brace me up, but I had no answers and could barely hear him for listening to the crash of the waves astern. All the rest of the night, or the early morning, for the storm had

come upon us after midnight, we stood there, wet to the skin with the wind off the Andes, chilled by the snows, biting through us to the bone. Stimson, hearing the chatter of my teeth, which I could not hush, wanted to go below for blankets, but I would not let him. I dared not stay there alone.

It was four o'clock in the morning and beginning to lighten a trifle behind us when Stimson suddenly cried, "I believe we've outraced it!" and I followed his gaze astern to see a perceptible diminishment in the size of the waves. The wind, too, was lowering, and I gave a deep breath of thanksgiving as I saw a break in the dark clouds overhead and a corresponding increase of daylight. Then quickly, almost as quickly as it had come up, the storm ceased. The wind died out and, while great seas still followed us, they were not lashed into foam and were far less terrifying. Stimson left me to handle the wheel, which was behaving much more amiably, and went below for blankets, one of which he wrapped about me, making me lie down on the cockpit floor. "Get some sleep, Bobbin, for you've earned it," he said, placing a second blanket to pillow my head. "You've been a sailor this night, sure enough, and if you sail every night for fifty years, you would probably never see worse. But it's over now—all over but the shouting!"

I was asleep while he still spoke.

CHAPTER III

THE COZY OIL CASK

"ROB! Oh, Rob! Wake up, lad!"

It required loud shouting and vigorous prodding to bring me back from my dreams to the realities of life and I sat up dazed, rubbing the sleep from my eyes. The sun shone bright and clear, an hour or more above the horizon line which stretched in a great circle of sea touching sky all about us. The wind was gone and the rags of the jib swayed limply as the "Sally B" rolled in the long swell of the sea, the only visible memory of the storm.

"Take the wheel here, Bob," said Stimson, and there was a note of anxiety in his voice which brought me wide awake. "This old scow seems to be settling, and I'm going below to take a squint at her."

"Sinking—are we sinking?" I gasped.

"I want to find out. Maybe it's only the water she took in last night that makes her so loggy," and Stimson, leaving me at the helm, went down the after hatch.

In a few moments he came up and hurried down the forward companion. When he returned to me there was an expression of deep concern on his face.

"It's a bright morning for a shipwreck, Bobbin lad," he said, looking away out to sea. "If it wasn't that we are sinking, I'd like to go right on sailing a day like this."

I felt a big lump come up in my throat and almost choke me. I looked away from Stimson that he might not see how frightened I was or the tears which gathered in my eyes.

"She's leaking like an old kettle," he continued. "With just you and me, there's no chance to keep her afloat. So we've got to move, Bob."

"But where are the crew?" I managed to ask. I still thought them unconscious in drink below decks.

"You were right last night; it was they you saw at the café, without a doubt. There isn't a soul aboard but you and me, Bob, and the 'Sally's' doomed. The seams have opened with the racking of the storm, and she's filling like a sieve."

"What are we to do?" I cried. "We must be miles and miles from land!"

"You're right, lad—more than a hundred miles, but it's better being on top of water a hundred miles from land than being near land a hundred feet under water." He smiled cheerfully, standing barefooted, a straw hat on the back of his head, his hands deep in his pockets. "Yes, Bob," he said slowly, "we're still atop and we'll keep atop. If the 'Sally B' won't float as a whole, we'll have to float a part of her. Now those two hatches should keep you and me above water a considerable time."

"A raft?" I cried, catching his drift.

"Right, first guess. Those two hatches on top of, say, six empty barrels would make quite a substantial raft. Now, Bob, there are plenty of barrels in the hold. Let the 'Sally' steer herself and you and I will get busy." He started for the hold, jumping with a splash through the hatch. "Don't be afraid of wetting your feet," he called back to me cheerily.

There was knee-deep water in the hold, but we waded in and with a hand axe drove in the bung of one of the oil casks, letting its contents mingle with the bilge. Then Stimson had a new idea, and he stopped me as I was about to broach the second. "Leave the oil in them," he said. "They'll float just as well, even steadier, and less likely to leak. We'll hoist them over with the tackle."

So we lifted these barrels to the deck and laid them

in two rows, three casks, end to end, in a row, after Stimson had carefully looked to the security of the plugs and driven tight the hoops. I was sent to the captain's cabin in a search for tools, returning with a carpenter's chest and a keg of miscellany, nails, screws, spikes and bolts.

Under Stimson's direction, I cut the sails from the fore and main gaffs and sawed these lighter spars into nine foot lengths, one of which was placed at either side of the two rows of barrels with timbers bolted across to make a solid framework, nine feet by seven, the barrels wedged in between. To hold the casks even more securely, Stimson bound them to the spars, both around and lengthwise of the barrels, using the three-quarters inch jib-hoist. This finished, and it was the work of two hours under the spur of the necessity of quick action, we edged it with levers over the side of the nearly water-logged schooner into the sea.

It floated high, the oil-filled casks lay with a third of their diameter above the surface, and when Stimson stepped to the spar there was scarce a perceptible lowering, although his weight was upon one side. With a line, he moored the skeleton of the raft to the rail while we built it a deck.

"She's fine, Bob lad!" he cried, as we hauled the hatches into place and lashed them fast to the framework of spars, through auger holes bored in the coaming. "Plenty of room, floats like a duck, and steady as a sand barge. What shall we call her?"

"The 'Rolling Oil Cask,'" I suggested.

"The 'Cozy Oil Cask' is better, for she's too steady to roll. If I had a bottle of salad oil to break over her bow, and she had a bow to break it over, we'd hold a christening. Hurrah for the 'Cozy Oil Cask'!"

"Hadn't we better get aboard without any ceremonies? The 'Sally' is pretty low in the water."

She was, indeed, almost awash with the low roll of the sea, but there was so little motion that we had not noticed it before. Now Stimson ordered me to the raft. "Be ready to cut loose the moment I give the word," he said. "Use the hatchet and chop the hawser. Push well off so the 'Sally' will not foul her when she sinks. I'll jump aboard before she goes, never fear; and I'll cargo you before that," and he hastened away to the cabin.

A cask of water was the first thing placed aboard the raft, and it was followed by two casks of sea biscuits, the carpenter's chest and our rolls of clothes and blankets. Stimson passed me his rifle and other weapons, warning me to place them well away from damp, then brought from the cabin an axe, a shotgun, old fashioned and muzzle-loading, a small cask of powder, two bags of shot, a case of canned meat and a sack each of sugar and coffee. From my position alongside, it seemed that the "Sally" would sink any minute, and I urged Stimson to leave her at once. "She'll sink while you're in the cabin," I pleaded, "and then what could I do!"

He promptly came over the side, untied the line

and pushed away from the schooner. "We can't get all I'd like to take," he said regretfully, "but we've done fairly well as it is, so I mustn't complain."

"Not when the 'Sally' is settling deeper every minute," I replied. "Let's get farther away from her."

We could not, for we had forgotten to bring away any oars. That was an omission of a serious nature, so we paddled with a piece of plank slowly back alongside and I clambered over the "Sally's" side. I remembered seeing an oar jammed in with the wreckage forward, a relic of the ship's boat which had been carried away in the storm. Finding it quickly, I looked about for another that we might use with it.

"Come down here, Bob," called Stimson anxiously. "Are you trying to commit suicide?"

"She is steady enough," I answered, forgetting the fears I had when I was waiting below. "There's lots of stuff here I can bring off."

"You bring yourself off without any more nonsense!" commanded Stimson, and I could only obey.

Again we left the "Sally B" to settle quietly into her grave, and Stimson, using the oar as a scull, put a hundred yards or more between us. Then we began to arrange our supplies, lashing everything down so that no sea might carry it away. It was a warm day, though the heat was tempered by the cooler water, and we worked throughout the morning without serious discomfort, eating a luncheon of sea biscuit washed down with a cup of water.

"The 'Sally B' is as slow sinking as she was sailing, I'm thinking," remarked Stimson as he lolled at ease on a blanket, munching a biscuit and watching the slow roll of the schooner, now down to her scupper-holes. "I wonder if she ever intends to go down."

"Suppose we go back and rifle her some more," I suggested, having acquired confidence in her staying qualities from my short trip aboard.

"We might risk it," said Stimson, slowly. "Another cask of water aboard here would make me a trifle happier."

"Let's first decide just what we're going after, so that we'll lose no time and handle no truck that would be useless."

"Good idea. A sail for an awning is my first suggestion. We might just as well be civilized castaways with all the modern conveniences. I saw some cans of jelly and a half dozen books in the captain's cabin."

"Shouldn't we get the compass?"

"Certainly we should; also a glass and the instruments. We'll have to go back. Give me that oar."

Stimson soon propelled the clumsy craft alongside the schooner and he climbed gingerly aboard, his weight at the side sending a wave of water across deck to splash through the open hatches. We waited to see the effect, Stimson ready to leap to the raft, but the schooner came to an even bottom and seemed no deeper down.

"There's air in her below decks somewhere," said

Stimson, "and it is enough to float her, full of water as she is. Make fast to the stern, Bob, and stand by to load what I pass you. I'm going to wade into the cabin."

"Be careful!"

"Right O! Careful it is!" he called cheerily and splashed down the aft companion into water to his chest.

For an hour Stimson went back and forth from cabin to raft, bringing armloads of water-soaked goods, and I piled them on the "Cozy Oil Cask." There were kettles, pans and other movable utensils from the galley among the important articles of salvage; a pin cushion, straw hat and a tin candlestick among the less useful. At some of the things I laughed loudly, especially when Stimson passed over a bundle of old newspapers bordering on pulp. "Put 'em where they'll dry," he cried. "With crimped edges they'll be fine to cover shelves."

At last everything that could be safely removed was aboard the raft. The cargo was too heavy to tackle and Stimson would not venture the forecastle. "It's the air cooped up for'd there," he explained, "that's keeping the 'Sally' afloat. Let that out and good-bye 'Sally.' Anything else you need or can suggest?"

"No. Please leave her now," I begged, for every trip Stimson made below I feared would leave me a lone raftsman. "We've enough aboard the 'Cozy Cask' to start a junk-shop now."

"Steady, boy; don't get nervous. Here's rope, canvas, pulleys and tackle that we need right now and may need worse later. We'll step a mast for'd on the raft and rig up a sail, and we'll have a canvas cabin aft and be comfortable in our voyaging. First though, we must condense our belongings."

"We can throw most of our belongings away," I remarked, looking them over with a grin.

"Not a one—not a single, solitary belonging unless we have to and until we have to. We'll build them into a bulwark about the raft; they'll help keep us dry, we'll have deck room to navigate and be comfortable as an ocean liner. Catch this coil of line!"

Under Stimson's direction, I helped build a wall of salvage across the square bow and along both sides of the raft, and we covered it with the sail-cloths, winding them with ropes that lashed them securely to the timbers and casks. We raised a spar near the bow, staying it securely, and rigged up a square sail about eight by twelve feet that could be raised or lowered. This was the work of several hours and when done, Stimson expressed approval. "She probably won't steer," he remarked, looking at the blunt nose of the craft, "and she hardly could be expected to; but now we can use the wind when it's going the same direction we want to go and we needn't use it when it isn't."

The building of a cabin was the last work of the day and before we began on it, Stimson cast loose from the

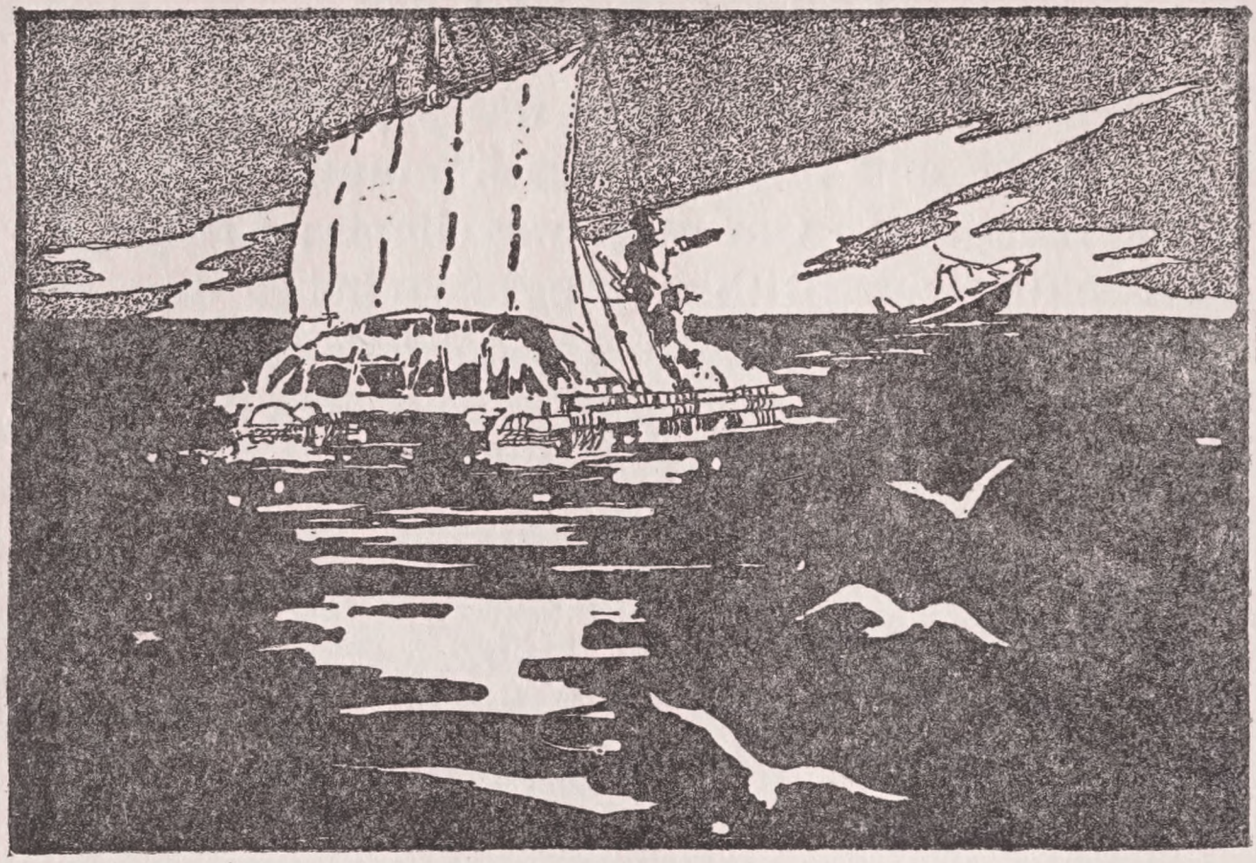
"Sally B," for the schooner was perceptibly settling by the stern and threatened each minute to slip away below the water. Our cabin was simple; a ridge pole on two uprights, with a canvas stretched over and nailed to the deck, made us a dog-tent high enough and large enough to sleep in or lounge in during the heat of the day.

"There you are!" cried Stimson, surveying the finished work with a sigh of fatigue and a smile of pride. "She's done, is the 'Cozy Cask,' and she's a really-truly craft. She's neither sloop, yawl nor schooner, clipper, brig nor ship, kyak, proa nor catamaran; but if the wind blows fair, she'll carry us to haven."

"Hurrah for the 'Cozy Cask'!" I shouted. The sun sank into the sea, a dazzling orange disc dipping into the green of the endless waters that met cloudless sky on every side.

"Look! The schooner!" shouted Stimson.

Gracefully, slowly, lifting her broken spit to the sky, the "Sally B" slid rudder foremost beneath the sea, her masts cutting a wake of white foam. They too disappeared, leaving a momentary sheen of bubbles on the oil-like roll of the waves. Then, north, south, east and west was ocean to the utmost limit of vision, a solitude of green waters.



CHAPTER IV

WE GET A DINNER OUT OF THE AIR

THERE is but short twilight in the tropics. Almost with the sun's setting came on the night, moonless but lighted with millions of stars, and as though signaled by the passing sun, the first puffs of a breeze struck the raft. It was an offshore wind, and Stimson frowned as he felt it on his cheek.

"A breeze that isn't apt to blow us any good," he declared, studying the compass. "We're plenty far offshore as it is, and we're not honing for extended travel. Let's hope it comes no stiffer and carries us no farther

away from Ecuador. What do you say to supper, Bob?"

I said supper promptly. I was hungry as a bear, and sea biscuits with jam spread thickly atop were remarkably fine eating. When we had finished and cleared away, we spread blankets over a piece of sailcloth and lay down on deck, but tired as I was, I did not feel like sleep.

"I wonder how long this breeze will last?" I ventured as I stared up at the stars. "We can never get back to Guayaquil unless it changes."

Stimson did not answer for so long a time that I began to think he was asleep. Then he rolled over, facing me.

"Bob," he said, soberly, "I'm afraid this wind is going to blow from the east more or less steadily for three months. It is the offshore monsoon, and it began in the tempest last night."

"How far are we from land?" I asked.

"At a guess, a hundred and fifty miles."

"And the other way?"

"West? Half the world, probably. Let's see—we are almost directly on the equator. You're fresh in geography, Bob; what lands does the equator cross?"

I closed my eyes trying to remember the map of the world as it came in my atlas. "In South America, through Brazil, Columbia and Ecuador," I began.

"That last is our starting place; keep on going west."

"I'm trying to think what is next west," I said slowly.

"Hits into the East Indies somewhere, doesn't it?"

"Yes—cuts Borneo and Sumatra; but there are islands in the South Seas before you get to Borneo."

"The Gilberts?"

"There's another group with a long name way this side of the Gilberts. It's Gal—Gala ——"

"Galapagos!" Stimson shouted the word, jumping to his feet in excitement. "The Galapagos islands! Sure, boy—are you sure the equator cuts them?"

I was sure. I could see that map before my mind's eye with those little specks of islands around the black line of the equator. The name was so much bigger than the islands that I had always remembered them, knowing nothing more of them than that they lay off Ecuador and the equator cut the biggest speck.

Stimson was hauling the square sail to the masthead. "We're going to sail, not drift," he called joyfully. "Make sail, Bob! We're on our way for the Galapagos."

I helped him fasten the stays so the square sail bellied to the breeze, and felt the raft take a new motion under the pull of the canvas. It steadied as though it had work to do, and there was a gurgling as the casks drew through the water. Stimson stood and watched the sail, feeling the stays of the mast and the lashings of the casks, for there was a creaking now as the different parts of the crude craft fell into their

working places. At the square bow a little wave of water pushed against the canvased bulwark, but the deck of the raft was dry.

"She'll do!" observed the captain, shoving the oar out astern to act as a rudder. "Bob, hand me that compass and we'll lay a course for the Galapagos."

I found a little tin lamp, which I lighted, and by it we studied the compass. The wind came from the east-south-east, so we steered a couple of points to the south of west to allow for drift. "The Galapagos are not more than six or seven hundred miles from Guayaquil," Stimson said, "and as they're directly under the equator, navigation is easy. We'll make them sure!"

"Are they civilized?" I asked, taking hold of the steering oar with Stimson. He scratched his head.

"Bob, I know just as little about those islands as any man could, and there aren't many men that know much more. Ecuador owns them, but whether they keep a colony there, I never heard. However, Robin lad, they're land, and there's probably a way to get off them if we once get on; so we're for them."

"And we can't sail back against the wind," I added.

I went to the cabin and to bed by command of the "Cozy Cask's" captain, and slept calmly through the first night of her cruise. Stimson, too, slept the greater part of the night, as he told me next morning, being too fatigued by the exertions of the past forty-eight hours to keep his self-appointed watch of the craft. He

lashed the steering oar and the wind held steady through the night.

I was the first to awaken in the morning, the sun already up, and there came over me the lonesomeness of this vast solitude of sea. On all sides of our raft was water to the edge of the world, water that slowly rose and fell in dreadful monotony. We were a lone, little speck on the bosom of the sea, so small that it seemed we might vanish without there being a noticeable change in the ocean's appearance. It was a depressing sensation of littleness and aloneness, and a great sweep of longing for my mother caused me to bury my face in the blankets and sob. Then I heard a sort of whirring noise and looked up quickly, startled, to see a school of fish, small of body but with large fins, rise up from the water beside the raft and by quick motion of their tails and lower fins, fly for several rods in the air, sinking again to the water. My grief left me in the surprise of it and the comfort of this companionship on the great sea, these sailors so much smaller than were we.

"Stimson—Captain!" I called, shaking the form beside me. He sat up hurriedly, looking first at the mast and sail, then at me.

"What is it, Bob?" he asked. "Trouble?"

"No—fish; fish that fly," I explained, and told him of the occurrence.

"Good enough!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "Fried fish for breakfast. How big were they?"

"Not large—about twelve inches long, I'd say. How shall we catch them?"

"Shoot them," he replied, going for the shotgun. "I'll show you how to angle for bat-fish."

"Bat-fish?"

"That's their vulgar name—flying fish sounds prettier and describes them better. Ho! There they go again!"

This time the school—or another—arose from the water a greater distance from the raft but still within shotgun range had the weapon been loaded and Stimson ready, but they were gone again before we found powder and shot among the stores. Then, loaded and capped, gun cocked, Stimson stood ready for the next flight. I held my breath, waiting, waiting; then breathed again, for I could not hold it longer. Not a ripple disturbed the placid swell of the sea.

"Fish," remarked Stimson, lowering the hammers of the gun, "are well enough for breakfast, but breakfast, fish or no fish, is a better word. There is still jam and sea biscuit and—yes! Coffee! Shall we forego fish this morning, Bob?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" I answered briskly.

"Then a good wash first. You swim, Bob?"

"Yes, fairly."

"Then off clothes and into the big tub," cried Stimson, setting example, and a minute later he plunged into the sea, I following in a quieter manner, letting myself over the bulwarks. The water was delightfully cool and we swam and sported about the raft, never ven-

turing farther than an oar's length away, by Stimson's command. The wind had gone down as the sun climbed higher, and there was very little motion to the "Cozy Cask."

After a refreshing bath we dressed in shirt and trousers and began preparations for breakfast. Stimson built a fireplace in the bows before the mast, just a little fireplace made with an iron skillet raised an inch or so above deck on nails. In this he built a fire of splinters and small blocks of wood, and hung the tea-kettle above it on a tripod. I was surprised at the rapidity with which the water boiled over the little flame, but Stimson explained that a camp-fire should always be small to do effective cooking, and he proved it by adding a couple of slices of fried salt pork to go with the excellent coffee he had made. We had coffee with sugar, sea biscuit and salt pork, and I felt as comfortable as I had been miserable when I first awoke.

"Now," said Stimson, when the dishes had been washed in the sea, "the very first thing all shipwrecked people do after filling their stomachs with food is to inventory their possessions. Here we are—you and I—sailing for a desert island, so far as we know, and we must list up our supplies."

"What shall we find on the islands?" I asked wonderingly.

"Turtles, sure. That is what the name means, Galapagos. I have seen some of the great tortoises from the islands in the park at San Francisco."

"And birds and animals, too, I suppose?"

"I should feel certain about birds; animals, perhaps."

"What kinds of animals?"

"I can only guess. On the mainland yonder there is as considerable a variety of big, medium and little beasts as may be met in any jungle on earth. There are panthers, jaguars and tiger-cats, any of which would be sporty shooting for a big-game artist. There are various kinds of antelopes, goats, mountain sheep, and many kinds of small game. Any of these or all of them may be on the Galapagos."

"Lucky we have firearms," I exclaimed. "Let's begin our inventory with weapons and ammunition."

"That is Crusoesque. Put 'em down." Stimson handed me the schooner log and a pencil. "One shotgun, which I have here beside me, loaded for flying fish which do not fly; one Mauser repeating rifle; one army revolver, with about fifty cartridges for each."

"One keg of powder and a sack of shot," I added. "How long will they last?"

"That depends on how we use them, but it won't frighten me away from bagging some bat-fish. Besides, Robin, there are other ways of capturing beasts and birds besides shooting them, and methods of making weapons of defense as substitutes for guns. If we are on a desert island six months, I will have you as clever an archer as Robin Hood."

I remembered Locksley's archery in "Ivanhoe," and

I smiled, but it was good to have Stimson so certain of the happy outcome of things. He did not worry at all at the prospect before us, and it was reassuring to me. He seemed to think we were supplied with everything two individuals might ever need, as we continued to list our inventory, which we headed with a short statement of the wreck of the "Sally B" and dated, figuring backwards for exactitude. He had a word of congratulation over each pot, kettle and pan, each bolt, pulley and screw as it was listed, and at the conclusion, when I read it all back to him, he clasped my hand heartily. "Not a bad beginning at all for light housekeeping," he declared. "Many a married couple in the populous places has started off with less."

I closed the log-book to put it away. "Wait," cried Stimson, taking it from me and opening it to the last page. "This sheet will be our calendar and to you, Robert Trevlin of San Francisco, is allotted the task of keeping it straight. A line for a week day, a cross for Sunday, as Robinson Crusoe did it many years ago. Every morning the first thing, you to the calendar. Do you accept the responsibility?"

"I do," I replied gravely, and I drew the first line and marked it with the day of the week and month, just as a little puff of breeze sent a ripple across the water. Another puff, stronger, and the wind began again, still easterly. Stimson hurriedly grasped the steering oar and after studying the compass, threw the "Cozy Cask" on its course along the equator. It was a

light breeze, which would have been a calm to a ship and would barely have stirred the sails of a schooner, but it pushed us along easily. Stimson decided we should have more canvas, so we rigged up a larger sail from one of the "Sally's" tops'ls and hoisted it on a spar aft the cabin. It gave us a wake behind and a wave of white over our bows.

"We'll try it out," said Stimson, watching the strain on casks and spars with an anxious eye. "It's driving her a bit hard, but with this wind she can hold it. To-night, Bob, we must stand regular watches."

"All right, Captain," I answered.

"You will have the first watch from eight bells to six bells."

"What is that by the clock?"

"You don't know the nautical clock?" asked Stimson, then smiled. "Of course not, for your sailing has been restricted to wrecks and rafts. Eight bells is eight o'clock in the evening, in this instance, and six bells is eleven at night. But let's start at the beginning, Bob; midnight is eight bells, and it begins the day. A half hour later is one bell; one o'clock is two bells, one-thirty three bells, and so on up to four in the morning, which is eight bells again and the end of the first watch. Then we start with one bell again at four-thirty. Midnight, four in the morning, eight and noon, four in the afternoon and eight in the evening are each eight bells, and each eight bells ends a watch. Six watches of four hours each."

I figured it out slowly. "One o'clock is two bells, half-past one three bells, two is four bells, and so on?"

"Yes; up to eight bells, then begin over again. Simple enough, isn't it?

"Confusing at first. I have the watch from eight bells to six. Why have you chopped an hour off mine? Didn't you say a watch was from eight bells to eight bells?"

"Yes, but you are an apprentice, and so do not get full watches yet. I go on duty at six bells and come off at eight; then I snooze until breakfast time."

I could see that Stimson was giving me the best part of the night for my rest and taking the bulk of the work and the bad hours of watch for himself, but for fear he might mistrust my watching capabilities I did not venture to interfere with his arrangement. I made up my mind that I would graduate from apprentice into the able seaman class as quickly as possible and give him better opportunity for sleep. In the meantime I went through a catechism of nautical time, something like this:

"What is three o'clock?"

"Six bells."

"And half-past eleven?"

"Seven bells."

"And half-past five?"

"Three bells," and so on, hit or miss, until I became so expert that bells were almost as familiar to me as hours.

We Get a Dinner Out of the Air

So the morning hours slipped by, the "Cozy Cask" plowing her way into the west, and Stimson had just suggested dinner when—Whir! and up from the water almost beside us arose a big school of flying fish. Stimson dropped the steering oar to grasp the shotgun and the bang, bang of the double barrels sounded almost simultaneously. Running to the masts, I quickly lowered the sails, and the raft lost motion at once, amid a score of white bellied fish, some killed by the shot, more by the concussion of the heavy loads.

"It is going to be a very fine fish dinner, Bobbin," remarked Stimson as he took off his clothes to retrieve the game.

CHAPTER V

"IT IS LAND"

THE breeze strengthened steadily during the afternoon, and before sundown we were obliged to take down the larger sail. Even then the raft made a great ado over its passage, churning through the water with a groaning and gurgling that reminded me of the complaining of an old, unoiled lumber wagon. Stimson had fears for the lashings of the barrels, always his chief concern, for they were the foundation of our safety, but they seemed to hold strongly and the wind sent us on our way at a lively rate. It was no gale at all, Stimson assured me, but we, being so near the water's surface, necessarily felt it much exaggerated.

"If this wind will hold and the raft will hold," he said to me as we ate bat-fish for supper that evening, "it will not be many days before we raise the Gala-

pagos. The 'Cozy Cask' is not a racer, but she's making six knots or better right now."

"How much is a knot?" I asked, for I wished to do some mental arithmetic with miles as a basis.

"Six thousand and eighty feet," responded Stimson promptly. "The one-sixtieth part of a mean degree of a meridian."

"More than a mile," I said, multiplying yards by rods and getting all mixed up.

"A mile has 5,280 feet, so a knot or nautical mile is 1.1515 land miles. Six knots an hour is nearly seven miles an hour, or 168 miles a day. There is your basis for figuring just when we'll land on the Galapagos islands," and Stimson smiled good-naturedly, for he knew that I was already wearied enough of a sailor's life.

I took the first watch at the steering oar and Stimson went to sleep in the canvas cabin after instructing me to call him in any one of many contingencies, chief of which was an increase in the wind. There was little for me to do, the rudder being lashed and the wind steady, so I sat on the bulwark beside the oar and watched the stars. Now and then a larger wave trailing us would break over the stern and push up to the bulwark, but only a few small streamlets of water would creep beyond, puddling across the deck and under our cabin tent.

At eleven o'clock, six bells, I was relieved by Stimson who awoke on the minute, as though he had

timed his sleep. He looked at the compass, held up a wet finger to measure the breeze, shifted the oar a trifle, then sent me to bed. The cabin by now was rather too wet for comfort, spray and the breaking waves having dampened blankets and the canvas beneath, and they held a chill that made me toss restlessly between sleep and waking. I could hear the captain moving about the deck as he tested ropes and stays, then heard him give a sharp exclamation, "By jiminetty!"

"What is it?" I cried, throwing the blanket aside and poking my head out of the cabin.

"Look here, Bob," he replied, speaking low. "What do you make of that?"

I was beside him in a moment, and my eyes followed the line of his pointing arm. The sky and the sea were of that deep, indigo blue of a moonless night, merging one into the other without break, sea and sky darkening evenly as they joined; and away off to the south, either in the sky or on the sea, so close it was to the horizon, flamed a great white light like a monster star.

"What is it?" I asked, and a feeling of awe and the mystery of the sea made me whisper the question.

"You may have as many questions as you please," Stimson answered, and though he spoke lightly I could feel he held a fear not caused by the peril of our position, the dread of that which one sees but cannot understand. "I don't know, Bob. Is it star of the

sky or light on the sea? Which does it seem to you?"

I did not answer, watching the brightness of that spot of white. There was no flame, no flicker, no twinkle. If it was star, it was the largest star in all the heavens, many times. At first I thought it had motion toward the east but when I established its position by a low, fixed star, I found that I had been mistaken by the progress of the raft. The white light was motionless unless it was coming toward us, directly at us. This was possible, for to my tired eyes it grew bigger the longer I stared at it.

"Is it coming this way?" I asked, turning to Stimson.

"No, I think it is standing still. If it were anyway possible, I'd call it a lighthouse. It cannot be more than twenty miles away if it is on the sea."

"Might it be a ship on fire?"

"No; too white and too steady. Not a sign of flame."

"If it were on the water would we not see some reflection?"

"Not at this distance. We are too low in the water to get a distant horizon, so there would be no reflection even if it were much less than a score of miles away. But I'm not sure that it is not some comet or big star."

We watched it for hours, and it never varied, a white ball of fire, blue white, almost on a level with our eyes. At times we believed it must be star or comet, and

again we decided that it was the search-light of some steamer or cruiser. Then, suddenly, it disappeared while our eyes were upon it—went out. Where it had been, it was not. I blinked, thinking I had closed my tired eyes, but it was gone.

"Jiminetty!" gasped Stimson. "That's just how it came!"

"Gone in a jiffy!" I said, grasping his arm.

He laughed. "Show's all over, Bob. To bed with you," and he pointed at the tent. I crawled back into the damp blankets and finally went to sleep.

I did not keep my second watch. Stimson let me sleep until seven o'clock, and my first question was of the light. It had not returned. In the broad daylight I stared long at the place where it had seemed to be, but there was nothing in sea or sky to account for the phenomenon.

Unlike the preceding morning, the wind still held with the sun's coming, if anything freshening a bit as the morning passed, and we had to forego our plunge. I prepared breakfast and soon afterward the captain went to sleep. It was a wet day, spray flying from the tops of the waves, soaking us through and through and making our low deck a damp, sloppy and slippery place. When Stimson awoke at noon, he went carefully over every rope, lashing and fastening on the raft.

"It's a marvel how well she stands it," he commented admiringly. "This is a racking strain for any small craft, let alone a home constructed raft, but, Bob,

the 'Cozy Cask' is as tight as when she was launched. What do you say to more canvas?"

I was willing so long as Stimson thought she could carry more, so we hoisted the mainsail again and felt the added motion in the increased racking and wetness of decks. The "Cozy Cask" was not a comfortable craft that day, what with water sweeping it from square stern to square bow, and we were wet to our knees with the spume, but the journey was being shortened by a knot or two an hour additional speed, and neither of us complained of the damp. The raft rolled, too, in a way that would have made any one addicted to seasickness extremely ill, but Stimson and I were immune, and the afternoon hours passed slowly away with cold meals and wet quarters.

With the closing in of night we looked eagerly for the white light, but it was not to be found. "We have passed it if it was of the sea," said the captain, "and it has passed us if it was of the heavens. I'm thinking it will be always one of those unexplained mysteries of the great oceans, like St. Elmo's lights and the 'Flying Dutchman.'"

"There never was a 'Flying Dutchman,'" I said positively, "and there certainly was a blue-white flame out there last night."

"You may be right, though the 'Flying Dutchman' has a great many disciples among seagoing folk," Stimson remarked. "It is a thing like that of last night that makes the phantom ship a believable proposi-

tion to the ignorant sailor. What they cannot understand and explain by known laws are ascribed to the supernatural, and I don't know as we can blame them, seeing what we have seen."

"But you do not think that light was unexplainable or supernatural?" I asked.

"Supernatural, no; unexplainable to you and me, yes, though that is not saying there is not a perfectly reasonable explanation for it somewhere else. It stumps me and it stumps you, yet maybe it is as simple as A, B, C."

All day we had been wet but without the discomfort of cold, for the sun had been tropical; now the spray cut in with the sting of chill, and there was no use trying to sleep. All night we sat close together at the stern beside the steering oar, each with a line about his waist firmly lashed to the deck spars, a necessary precaution against the racing waves that covered the raft and forced us to cling to each other. Slowly the night passed, each hour many times its normal length. Stimson endeavored to shorten them by tales of the sea, but conversation was difficult and interruptions frequent and serious.

Morning came at last, the sun popping up out of the sea without the preliminary of daybreak and dawn which I was used to in northern latitudes. Again the captain made a thorough examination of the raft, tightening and strengthening and repairing, anxious but confident. The "Cozy Cask" had suffered a severe

test as had, too, the "Cozy Cask's" crew, but both raft and crew had stood the strain, and now the warm rays of the sun, drying out both, giving cheer for chill, made us forget the horrors of the night.

While we ate breakfast, repeating the monotony of biscuits and jam, Stimson computed the day's run, estimating our speed and drift, and announced the result in encouraging manner. "Getting close, close, Bobbin lad!" he shouted. "'Most any time now you'll be seeing dry land pop up from the waves. A sharp lookout for'd is the order of the day."

We took turn about at the mast with the binoculars, scanning the horizon to west and north, and trying to sleep between duckings in the little tent. It was snatching cat-naps, for the wind was squally and unreliable, and just as soon as I closed eyes in sleep the crest of some high wave would wash over me and fill my mouth with briny water. Fortunately the sun was hot and made wet clothing endurable, and we were too happy over our expected release from voyaging to murmur at the discomforts. On watch, I took advantage of those moments when the raft was at the summit of the wave to sweep the roughly uneven horizon with the glasses, hunting for something besides green, white-capped billows.

It was Stimson, early in the afternoon, who first sighted land, and his cry of "Land ho, Bob!" drove all thought of sleep away from me. In a second, I was beside him at the mast, searching with the glass for

what he had seen, following with each rise of the raft his pointing finger.

"A little more north," he directed. "Looks like a blue cloud close to the horizon. It's a mountain, Bob."

For a long time I could see nothing; there was a mist on the glass and a mist in my eyes; but I was perfectly willing to take my captain's word for it, wiping my eyes secretly on my shirt sleeve behind the sail. He could see it now with the naked eye, and I was finally able to crowd back the tears of joy to make out a line of hills, or the pale blue summits of mountains, merging at the bottoms into the haze of the horizon.

"Goodish tall mountains those," cried Stimson, happily, gazing long through the glasses. "Our island has a summer resort appearance from this distance. Sea bathing, mountain climbing, delightful views of picturesque beauty, wonderful and realistic scenery. All the comforts of Newport with the delights of the Catskills."

"It is land!" I cried. "Any land seems good to me."

"Hurrah for the Galapagos!" he shouted, slapping me many sound blows on the back that did me good; and he waltzed me around the deck to a lively whistled tune, bumping me into the cargo and almost demolishing the cabin. If there were tears of joy in my eyes when we first saw land, there were hearty laughs from me now, and I joined lustily in the cheers we gave in greeting to the Galapagos.

Then we settled to work. I took the steering oar and at the captain's direction headed the raft directly for the distant mountains, while he began rigging up additional sails. It was no longer a question of whether our craft would stand more sail; we had four hours of daylight before us, and we wanted to sleep ashore. After once seeing land, the raft was impossible as a shelter for another night, and our eyes shone as we watched the mountains grow higher and the range grow longer, as one peak after another came out of the gray to join on the farther end. We could even see patches of green on the lower hills, and Stimson called them forests. The late afternoon sun made deep purple shadows and rose pink high lights of the rocky coast that faced us as we chased toward it.

"Not going to make it before dark," said Stimson finally, measuring the sun's height with his hand. "We can't run into that rocky coast at night, either, so we might just as well make up our minds to it."

"Oh, Captain," I cried, "let's try." I felt that I could not spend another night on the raft.

"No, Bob. I'd take a fair chance, for I hate this delay as much as you do, but there isn't a fair chance. We'd wreck in sight of land, and all we've been through would be useless. We'll keep away until morning—stand off far enough to be out of danger, and drift about until daylight."

It was a crushing disappointment, but I made my best effort to conceal it, knowing that Stimson was

right. We approached the shore to a distance of about three miles, then dropped sails within a tantalizing view of the island. It was not yet sundown, but there is no twilight worthy of the name in the tropics, and we could not expect more than an hour of light, so we prepared a good, warm dinner, the first cooked meal we had attempted since the wind came up. It was an acrobatic performance, with every tenth wave or so spilling over the deck, but we managed to boil coffee and fry pork, and we gazed hungrily at the shore as we ate hungrily of our meal. There were trees almost to the water's edge and behind them forest-clad mountains that became barren peaks at their summits. Also, between the stretch of sand that made a yellow line at the surf-fringed edge of the sea, there were many rocks, some poking their wet and shining heads above the sea, others indicated by the waves that broke into white foam above them.

As the wind was almost parallel with the coast, there was little danger of our drifting too close in during the night unless there came a change in its direction, and we both stayed awake all night to see that this did not happen and to watch the dark shadows of the cliffs ashore. As we moved slowly by, the mountainous formation of the coast slowly changed to a less rugged and more pleasing aspect. While a white line of foam along the beach made us give up any idea of attempting a night landing, stretches of meadows and woods showed dimly between the shore line and the rugged

hills and we were sure that daylight would discover a safe harbor for us.

Toward morning, in the darkest part of the night, we completely lost sight of shore, and a feeling of great fear came over me that we had passed the island and might never get back to it. Stimson reassured me by saying that it was impossible to have drifted far enough to pass beyond the long range of mountains visible at sunset, and he believed we were crossing some indentation of the shore, a bay or, perhaps, the mouth of a river. In less than an hour we had proof of the correctness of this view, for the dark form of the land reappeared much nearer than before, and as we drifted on it kept closing in.

"It's a point or spit running out into the sea," said the captain beside the foremast, striving to make eyesight more keen by the use of the glasses. "I don't like it at all," he muttered; then, briskly, "Up sail, Bob! We must beat out to sea."

"What is it?" I asked anxiously, for I could hear the breaking of surf on rock ahead, and see a dark line indistinct in the night.

"A reef," Stimson answered shortly, hauling at the hoist of the foresail. "Take the oar, Bob, and throw her over to port just as far as this canvas will hold wind. We've a coral reef in front of us, and if the 'Cozy Cask' expects to take us ashore, she'll have to do two points better sailing than she's ever shown. Bring her into the wind, Bob!"

I swung the heavy oar about in long sweeps, thrusting the bow of the raft into the waves, while Stimson got both sails set, trimmed almost square with the deck. For a second they fluttered either way, then filled to throw the bows back again toward the reef.

"Hold her! Hold her, Bob!" shouted Stimson, jumping to my side and adding his strength to the oar. Slowly she came into the wind, Stimson nursing her off a point at a time until the sails were drawing fairly. "She may do it," he said finally, "though she isn't all one might ask for on a tack."

"Can you see the end of the reef?" I asked, for my eyes were blinded by salt spume.

"I think so—not sure, but there's a break or an ending off thereaway. We can hold out till daylight gives us a helping hand, Bobbin, my boy."

The next half hour was an anxious time for us both. We were drifting closer all the time, though delayed by sail and rudder, and now the breaking of sea on rocks was plainly heard, a long hissing sound as the waves rushed in, a crashing and roar as they came back. We could see the white foam to our right getting nearer and more menacing each minute. It seemed now like shipwreck at the very end of our strange cruise, and Stimson shouted me the orders for preparation, raising his voice to be heard above the seething surf.

"Get a line about your waist," he called, "then tie it to me, tightly, too, and so it won't slip. If we beach,

go in with the wave as far as it will carry you and try not to come back with it. If you feel ground under your feet, clamp to it with your toes and clamp hard. I'll be close behind you and holding the line. We'll make it, lad—we'll make it yet!"

"Ay, ay, sir," I answered, trying to be brave, and I carried out orders while Stimson swept the great oar through the waves, sculling against the drift. Then the sun rose out of the sea, a great, glorious sun, giving us the light for which we had prayed; and it showed us the waves washing clear across the coral spit on which we were rapidly being dashed.

CHAPTER VI

THE ISLAND

A HALF MILE of white, surging, boiling breakers, broken here and there by the red-brown tops of coral on which the waves dashed great masses of silver spume, so close against us that it was hopeless to think that we might hold the "Cozy Cask" off to round the distant point, and a morning sun shining merrily down upon it and shipwreck; that was what faced us that first morning of the Galapagos. Bitterly we worked against the drift, sails, oars and spars, trying to force the raft away from the rocks, worn by the waters into many holes, like a huge sponge; every effort was vain, for, try as we might, we could not hold our own, the wind, now dead against us, forcing us into the reef.

Suddenly Stimson gave over his efforts, and with a cry to me which I could not make out for the noise of

the sea, threw the raft's head directly at the surf. I guessed what he was about to attempt and rushed to the mast, throwing the sail about to catch every breath of the wind. We were going over the bar! It was our only chance, barely that, but there was nothing else to be done. Stimson, leaning hard against the steering oar, looked straight ahead, a grim smile on his set face, and his eyes studied the reef before him with deep intensity. If the raft struck, it would be torn to pieces on the instant and our chances of holding to the submerged rocks were infinitesimal.

With the speed of a swooping gull, we came on the long breaker, its surge about our knees. I held to the mast and looked ahead at the jagged coral rocks beyond the receding wave. Would our wave be great enough to carry us over? Would we land on those pointed spurs to be ground to pieces? A second more and we were amid the white spray and above the reef. More than half-way over that billow carried us before it began to recede, then came the scraping of barrels against rock, a crash and a great tearing. One side of the raft was thrown high in air, there was the rending of rope lashings, and the mast to which I held went over the bows. I went with it, swept forward, to be dragged back again by Stimson's fierce pull at the line. For a long moment there was the grinding and breaking of casks torn by the rocks, then we began to lift again on a smooth sea. Like a miracle, the waves were robbed of their anger and the closely following billow, oily and

suave, caught us with steadying power, freeing us from the hold of the reef, lifting us over the rocks that reached for us. Lying sprawled on the deck where I had been jerked by Stimson's pull at the line, I saw him press with all his strength, oar blade against rock, and the power of mighty muscles was in that heave. Our broken craft rose with the long, smooth wave, raced with it, catching the rocks now and then with jerks and bumps, lines snapping, splinters flying, and Stimson at the oar shoving her on and on. Over we went, scraping, rasping, quivering, to drop into deep, quiet water beyond the spit.

Stimson lifted me to my feet. "Hurt, Bob?" he asked anxiously, and I had to shake myself to find out. I was breathless and bruised by the beating of the waves, but I was still whole and without broken bones. "Lucky as they make them!" declared the captain.

"What did it—quieted the sea?" I gasped when I could speak.

"Olive oil—good old salad oil," laughed Stimson. "It was our one chance, and I took it. Those barrels held enough grease to smooth out a big bit of sea, so I smashed them on the rocks. We went over on olive oil, Robin lad, and we're safe now with the hatches and most of the bulwarks."

We were still a half mile or more from the shore, but inside the reef it was as quiet as a duck pond, and the beach was free from breakers. Making land was merely the work of sculling the raft in and pulling her up the

gently sloping beach, and exhausted as we both were, we made the extra effort joyfully and were soon ashore. The feel of solid ground beneath my feet was real happiness after days of staggering about on the tops of waves and our experience with the top of a reef. I kicked my heels in air and started at a run for the trees, green trees of heavy foliage and massive trunks, that came down nearly to the water's edge, but was halted by a shout from the captain. "Hold on there, Bob!" he cried. "We will make that trip together. First take care of our cargo, then we'll go exploring."

There had been a shrinkage in our cargo caused by the enforced passage over the coral spit. A case of biscuit was gone, some of the pots and pans and my kit, which I had forgotten to make fast the last time I had it open, but the rest was safe, though wet and soggy. We carried everything up above the tide line, opening it up to the sun and wind so it might dry. The ammunition had not been damaged at all, the powder being in a cask and the cartridges water-proof, but we wiped them all carefully and spent considerable time in drying and cleaning the guns. All this was done before we broke fast on this first day in the Galapagos.

Stimson gave a sigh of satisfaction as he finished cleaning his rifle and pushed a clip of cartridges into the magazine. "Now, Bob, on to victory!" he cried merrily. "First we want water—fresh water that isn't flat and warm; then a temporary camp and breakfast. Have you loaded the shotgun, Bob?"

I replied that it had small shot in both barrels and a percussion cap on either tube. "Trade with me," said the captain, handing me the rifle. "I want to see what that spatter gun will do in the shooting line. We are apt to find small game."

"There are birds in plenty," I said. "I've been hearing their calls ever since we landed."

"So have I, and unless I am mistaken, I have heard the chattering of a band of hapales."

"Hapales?" I asked.

"Monkeys—little monkeys or marmosets. Lots of them in these tropical parts of America, but they're not proper game, although some folks eat them."

"I couldn't shoot a monkey, let alone eat it. It would seem like eating a friend," I declared, following Stimson up the sloping beach to the edge of the forest. The songs of the birds had stilled as we approached the woods and the trees, growing close together, made a darkness beneath that was almost twilight. If I had been alone, I never would have entered their shadow and I was somehow frightened even with Stimson beside me. He had no hesitancy in pushing aside the low-hanging branches and entering the wood and I followed in his wake with as much confidence as I could muster, still with a feeling of awe and eeriness that had come to me first the night of the white flame at sea, a mystery and dread of the unknown.

We did not talk now. I imagined that the captain felt some of the same apprehension that held me silent

in this unknown wood. Once or twice as we climbed up the knoll he looked back at me and smiled encouragement, and I attempted to return it, but my face muscles were stiff.

Our footsteps breaking through the underbrush was the only sound in the forest where a few minutes before had been numerous bird calls and flutings, and I had the impression of thousands of eyes watching us from the concealment of the foliage. Birds and beasts had ceased their chatter to follow with suspicious eyes these two new animals who had intruded upon their sanctuary. Though I could see nothing alive, hear no sound of motion, I was certain we were under espionage of many bright eyes.

"Bob," said Stimson, looking back, and I am sure I jumped. "Listen! Isn't that the rippling of water?"

I heard it at once, a distant murmur of running water, far away but unmistakable. "There is a creek down there somewhere," I said, pointing.

"The only thing alive in all these woods. What has become of the birds?" he asked.

"They are watching us. I can feel them watching us."

Stimson laughed. "We must be queer animals to them. They may never have seen a human before or heard the sound of a man's voice."

"Suppose I wake them up with the gun?" I suggested, ready to dissipate the silence by any means.

"Don't, Bob. Let them get used to us gradually, learn that we are friends, not enemies. We may have to kill a few for food, but never wantonly and never near our camp. We want the birds about us, and we want them singing."

I took the reproof meekly enough, for I had no desire in me for slaughter of bird or beast, and we followed the sound of the tinkling water down the hill a few hundred yards, coming out on a little flat where the large forest trees were replaced by palms and an underbrush of some blue berries. Along one side of this flat ran a brook, not wide nor deep, but its water was cold and sweet and we drank thirstily of the first fresh water that had passed our lips since we left Guayaquil. Beyond the stream, the hill ran up abruptly, an almost perpendicular bluff at the place where we had struck it, its top covered with trees.

We had brought biscuit, pork and coffee with us, a pot and skillet for the cooking, and we decided to breakfast beside the stream, hunting a place less choked by the berry vines, the fruit of which I had already tasted and hastily rejected because of its bitterness. The captain went up the stream and I took the downstream way, not intending to wander any distance or out of call of each other. The stream made a sharp decline, and I was obliged to descend several small bluffs to follow it, but within a few rods I found what I believed would be an ideal camp-ground. At the base of one of these little precipices, where the stream

made a waterfall dropping its waters into a deep and rocky pool, there was a little glade covered with smooth turf. Around its shoreward side was the fringing forest, and back of the brook was high cliff, and all was shaded, cool and harmonious. I let out a great halloo to notify Stimson of my success.

That shout came back to me a hundred times, echoes from the near-by rocks, then from the farther mountains, some so strong and clear that they seemed nothing else possible but an answering call. I sat down hurriedly, frightened, looking back and around to see if some one was not calling, although I knew they were echoes. Before the reverberations died away, the forest that had been so still since we entered it became a babel of bird notes and animal cries. I heard the flapping of wings of the frightened flight of flocks of birds, the chattering and scampering through branches of bands of monkeys. With eyes staring wide and ears strained to hear each sound I waited for Stimson's answering call.

It did not come. The wood quieted again, slowly, mysteriously became silent. As though its hundreds of denizens were holding their breaths to watch me, themselves deep hidden, the forest shades loomed with stealthy furtive observers. I dared not call again, arouse the echoes and the woods. I waited, nervous and frightened.

"Bang!" came the report of a gun, then a second shot, and the forest again became alive with startled

cries and swift flight. I jumped to my feet, rifle in hand, looking for something definite to attack me, something I might identify as a foe or antagonist, but there was nothing in view. If a panther had sprung out at me, a jaguar crouched to attack, I believe I should have known what to do and had the nerve to aim and pull trigger, but with nothing visible to cause me fear, I was panic stricken.

I ran. I scrambled up the bluff by the waterfall and stumbled along over rocks and logs as though I was being chased by all the bogies in Bogieland! I heard Stimson call, "Ahoy, Bob!" but I could not find voice to answer, running on to meet him in panic. He swung out of the brush almost into my arms, and he grasped me as though I were running away, not to him. "What is it? What is it, Bob?" he cried anxiously, shaking me. "What has happened?"

"Nothing," I gasped, trying to catch my breath.

"But you are hurt—scared? Which is it?"

"Scared, that's all," I answered, already ashamed of my fright. "It was the echoes and the noises of the woods. Let's get out of here, back to the shore."

Stimson set the butt of his gun on the ground and looked me over. There was an expression of mingled anxiety and amusement on his face, but he did not laugh. "I shouldn't have left you alone, lad," he said finally. "It's the lonesomeness did it; but forget it now. I've found our breakfast and a place for our camp. Come along, and food will fix your nerves all right."

He had two large birds, magnificent of plumage, which he said were guans, a species of pheasant much more beautiful than those I had known in the north. Saying nothing of my discovery of a camping place, for the spot was loathsome to me, I followed him up-stream to where, a quarter of a mile above the place we had first struck the stream, there was an opening in the brush, an almost circular area of a half acre extent, the stream skirting its farther side. To me it did not seem so well adapted as the spot I had found, for it was exposed and unshaded, but it was certainly more cheerful with the sun shining down brightly upon it. Only along the stream were there any trees to serve as shade.

I made a fire while Stimson prepared the birds for cooking, and we were soon whiffing the pleasant aroma of broiling guans. With coffee and biscuit we had as fine a breakfast as any one could wish, and during it I confessed to the captain all my fright and told him of the fine place I had found for a camp. He decided against my place for the same reasons I had argued for it. "A great many people," he said, "are deluded by the belief that a camp should be under shady trees or beside a bluff that cuts off the sun in the tropics, but it is a mistake never made by an army man. The more sun that shines in the camp the better, even if you have to go away from your camp to keep cool, for the sun is the greatest killer of germs that there is. I'd rather face twenty tiger-cats, or thereabouts, than have some of these South American microbes get into my system.

I'm not half as afraid of our camp being attacked by wild animals as I am of fever germs creeping in, so we'll let your sheltered spot remain cool and shaded and lonesome, Bob."

We spent all the afternoon bringing up our supplies from the beach making six trips each way over the hill. It was not light work, but I was pleased to find that I was hardening to work and could do my share of it, not so much as Stimson, who seemed absolutely indefatigable, but a good bit without tiring too much. We first built a V-tent with one of the larger pieces of sail-cloth stretched over a pole atop of two posts, pegging it to the ground at its lower edges, and under this cover we piled our supplies, leaving room in the center for our beds. It was a crude shelter, but sufficient for our present needs, for the nights were clear and warm and there was little dew fall.

We finished our labors just before sundown and made dinner from the remains of the pheasants, warmed over with strips of salt pork. Then Stimson built up a big camp-fire before one end of the tent, not for heat but the companionship of the blaze, and we stretched out on our blankets. Night and the silence settled over us; the edge of the forest became a black fringe; the brook sang and whispered in undertones; the stars peered down into our little clearing; and Stimson and I forgot wild beasts, germs and microbes in the solid sleep of fatigue from hard toil.

CHAPTER VII

WE FIND WILD CHICKENS

A CHATTERING among the branches at the edge of the forest awoke me next morning just as the sun was coming up above the trees. I knew that it must be the marmosets which we had frightened away the day before, and I poked my head out of the front of the tent, hoping to catch sight of them. That they were watching our camp was evident, for before I could locate them they had seen me and were making off, jumping and chattering, through the trees.

Stimson was still sleeping heavily, and as I knew he needed sleep I did not wake him, but laid a fire and went to the stream for water, intending to have breakfast all ready when he awoke. Our tent was not more than twenty yards from the brook, but there was a bank to the stream which ran down abruptly to the

water's edge. I had come to the margin of this and was prepared to scramble down when I saw something that stopped me so abruptly that one foot stuck out over the ledge.

Below me, lying at length on a gray rock above the stream, was an animal that I thought was a tiger, so bright were its colors, yellow and black, and so strong it seemed as it stretched there, muscles poised. It had not heard me, for it was looking into the water, its head thrust out beyond the rock, and it was absorbed in the occupation of fishing. A swift stroke downward of its forepaw, a splash and the glittering of water thrown high in air, and the big cat jumped backward to grasp the fish it had so adeptly jerked out of its element. As it leaped, I turned and rushed for the tent and the rifle, at the same time calling to Stimson who, with shotgun in hand, broke from the shelter.

"What is it?" he cried as I passed him, plunging into the tent for the rifle which lay upon my blankets.

"Tiger!" I answered, and I saw a smile cross his face as he ran by me for the stream.

I joined him there a moment later, and pointed out the place where the big cat had lain. Then we hunted up stream and down, the captain keeping close beside me, but the beast had made its escape. "It certainly could not be a tiger," said Stimson, when I had told him all about it. "Tigers are not found in America, and there is no animal on these continents that will

compare in size with the Asian tiger. How big was your fisherman?"

"It lay there on that rock with its head beyond its farther edge and its tail was hanging a foot or more over this side."

"About four feet," remarked the captain, measuring with his eye. "Not much of a figure for a tiger, Bob."

"But it was marked like a tiger, yellowish with black rings around it, and it stretched out just as I have seen tigers in the circus. It waved the end of its tail, too."

"It belongs to the cat tribe, all right, and if I am not mistaken it was the clouded ocelot that you disturbed at its sport. It's a fierce little fighter, but nothing that we need fear, I am glad to say. I'd think different if it was a jaguar, but you wouldn't mistake a jaguar for a tiger. For a leopard you might, for it has black spots like a leopard and is even more ferocious than its old world cousin. But your fishing friend won't worry us. In fact, it has done us a good turn, for it has taught us that there are fish to be had in the stream, and fish are fine breakfast food. Let's follow the ocelot's example."

"Lie on the rock and jerk fish out with our hands?"

Stimson laughed. "No, I'm afraid that we should have to postpone breakfast until supper time if we tried it that way. We will see what a fish-line will do."

I did not tell him that we had no lines or hooks

because I had already begun to realize that the captain had a way of knowing what he was about when he made a suggestion. I followed him back to the tent and watched him take a strand of heavy linen thread from the spool. It was not strong enough to hold a fish of any size, but he set me at work at one end of it, he at the other, twisting in opposite directions. Finally, when it began to get kinky, he brought his end of the thirty foot line and ran his hand down between the two strands to keep them even, and let the twist wrap them into a single line of double strength. It was made in a few moments and it was strong enough for almost any kind of brook fish.

The hook was the simplest hook made—a bent pin. "It's primitive, but it will serve until I make better ones. I'll need a blow-pipe for that, and the blow-pipe will have to be made first. Then I can take temper out of needles, shape them into hooks and retemper them again. But we will see what the small boy's bent pin and a grub for bait will do to the inhabitants of the creek. Cut a rod and make a try for our breakfast, Bob."

I fixed my tackle and went to the stream, this time carrying the rifle, as I did not know whether the ocelot would be back at its rock. As it was not, I usurped its position of vantage and cast my bait into a deep hole down-stream. It had not more than touched the water when I had a bite and gave a quick and excited jerk. The line came out of water, and so did the bent pin,

but it was no longer bent in the shape of a hook. It had been straightened by my impulsive jerk.

I repaired damages, found another grub, rebaited and decided to take it more easily next time. Next time was immediately after casting, for my bait had no time to sink below the surface when it was seized by a hungry fish. I struck gently and was pleased to find that the fish was still attached when I began pulling in. It was a gamy little fish, and fought hard for a moment or two, but I let it tire itself before I lifted it from the water with a quick jerk that threw it behind me in the grass. For half an hour I caught fish, and lost fish that were too strong for my hook. The little ones I could land easily enough, but every time I struck a big one—and there were plenty of big ones,—the pin would bend and the fish would have my bait at the expense of a pricked mouth.

Stimson came down and carried away the catch, and soon called to me to desist catching for the pleasure of eating. It was nine o'clock by the chronometer and I was hungry enough to appreciate the first really civilized meal we had enjoyed in all the time we were sailors or castaways. There were hot cakes with jam in lieu of syrup, fried fish and salt pork, and coffee with sugar. It was a wonderful breakfast, and we ate it with appetite.

That our island was thickly populated by birds was evident to us while we were eating. Their first fright over, the newness of these new occupants of their little

glade gone, they began flying to and from the trees along the stream in great numbers and the varieties were so many that it was impossible to keep track of them all. "That is a paroquet," Stimson would say, pointing to a gorgeously colored green and yellow flyer; or, "There goes an ant-thrush," as a bird of long legs and short tail flew by. There were grass-finches, greenlets, doves of many kinds, a bright red flamingo, and a beautiful bird with long tail which the captain called a tyrant-bird. Then there were many small birds which Stimson did not know at all and had never seen before in his varied travels. I discovered the most remarkable of all these fowls, according to the captain, and it was a hen. Just a plain, ordinary, back-yard hen! It was walking at the edge of the wood scratching in the dirt as though it was hunting for worms in its own chicken yard. I called the captain's attention to it, and his surprise was more than mine had been at any of the marvelous birds that he had pointed out.

"A chicken?" he cried. "Here? What can this mean? A hen is not a wild bird. We have run into somebody's poultry yard. There must be people hereabouts," and he hurriedly made for the fowl. The hen saw him coming and gave a cry that I never heard in a chicken coop in my life. There was an immediate rustling in the woods, the swift beating of wings, and my hen rose in easy flight and disappeared among the trees. It flew as the grouse flies or as a prairie chicken

will get up from the ground, with swift, short strokes of the wings.

"They are wild," said Stimson, returning to his breakfast. "Wild chickens! It is the first time I ever heard of wild chickens—just plain, garden variety poultry! What do you think of this for an island, Bob? Furnishes us with fowls and hens' eggs. Soft-boiled eggs for breakfast to-morrow, Robin!"

"But there are wild chickens, aren't there?"

"You have seen the first that I ever heard of. That chicken is the direct lineal descendant of somebody's tame barn-yard Cochin egg producer. That bird, Bobbin, might have come from an incubator so far as looks are concerned."

"Then you believe there are people on this island?"

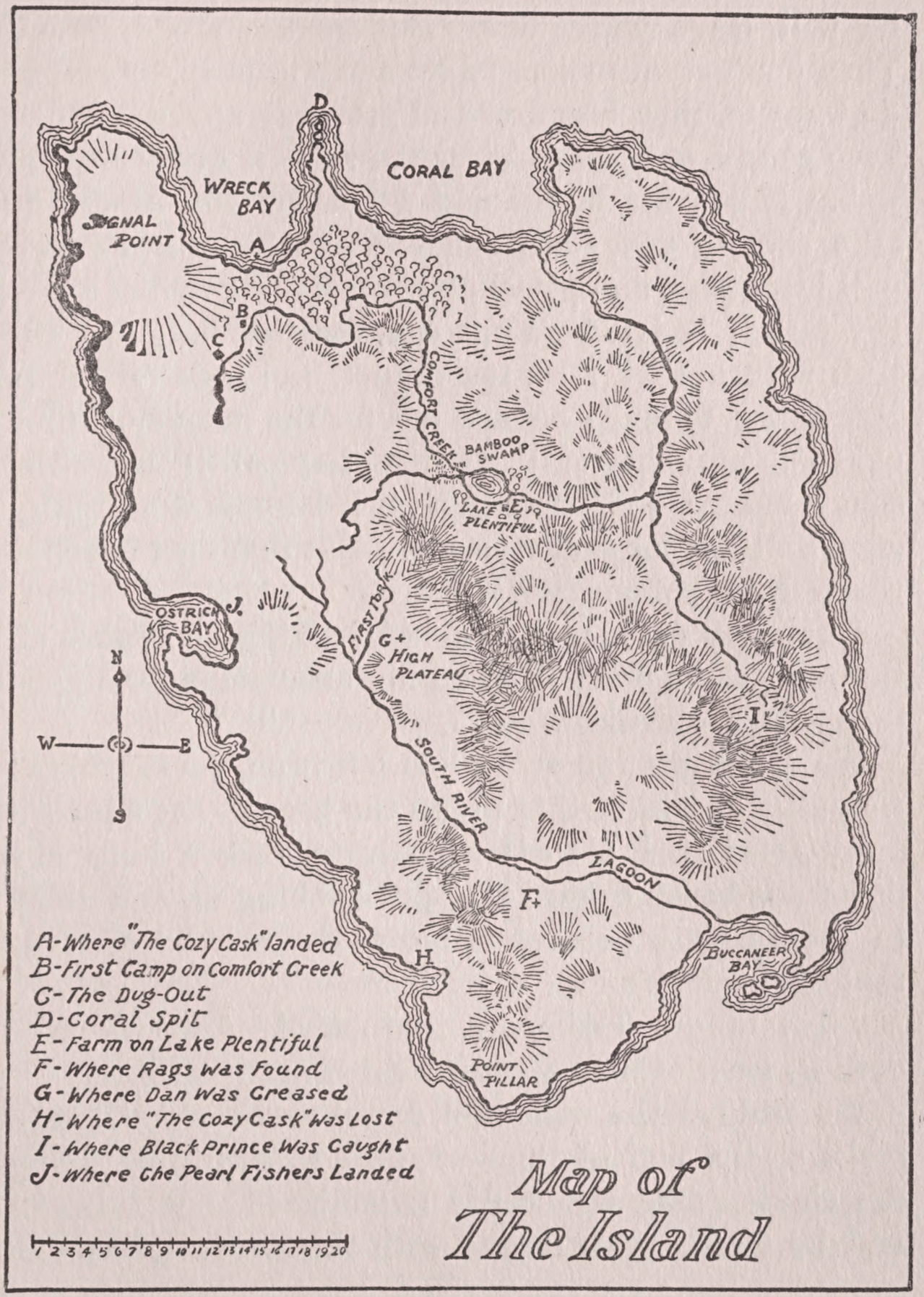
Stimson thought for a long while before he answered that question. "There may be; certainly there have been," he replied at last. "Either that fowl that we saw and the others which we heard are domesticated chickens gone wild, or they are the descendants of the poultry yard. I wonder what other queer things this island has in store for us."

The hapales were the next queer thing that the island held for me, although they were familiar animals to Stimson. A band of these little monkeys, probably the same I had heard in the morning, came and sat in the trees at the edge of the wood and talked us over among themselves. They were very timid, and would rush chattering into the interior of the woods

on the smallest provocation, but were so inquisitive that a few moments would find them back again. We watched them for a long time until the captain called attention to the passing of time. "There is lots to be done," he explained. "We are shipwrecked on a desert island, even if there are chickens and fresh eggs upon it. We must get up a signal of distress for passing ships to see, we must have the night flare made and ready to light, and we must take a general survey of the island. But first we had better go down to the raft and see that it is safe and above water. We may need that raft again. Come on, Bob."

We set off through the woods in the same order as the day before, Stimson with the shotgun in front, I following with the rifle. As we were not anxious to kill any game, we continued our conversation, and Stimson told me a great deal of the ways of wild animals. "There is only one thing we need have fear of on the island, I imagine," he said, "and that is snakes. All beasts of prey are timid of man and not only anxious to keep away from him, but able to do so. They are so keen of scent and eye that they can conceal themselves before we even know they are around and it is seldom you will run upon an animal so absorbed as was that ocelot this morning. Any beast that we find on the island is apt to leave us decidedly alone unless we begin the fuss. You wound a jaguar or tiger-cat or corner him and he will fight, and you'd better look out or you will get hurt. Leave him alone and

We Find Wild Chickens



Map of The Island

he will leave you alone. But snakes are different. They don't seem to care to get away usually, or if they do want to, they bite first and get away afterward. So keep your eyes wide open for the reptiles every minute, Bob. If you are bitten and I am not close around to take care of you, slash the bite with your knife so it will bleed good and plenty, tie your handkerchief above the bite if it is where you can, twisting it against the flesh with a stick for a tourniquet, and hike for camp. I'm going to keep an eye out for the maguey, which ought to grow here. In Mexico they call it the rattlesnake master, and the sap from it I know is a mighty good antidote for snake poison. But don't get bitten—that's the best remedy."

I kept my eyes on the ground, looking for snakes all the way to the beach, and on my excursions for a good many days afterward.

We found the raft as we had left it on the sands and we pulled it still farther up on the beach. As I turned away from it, I noticed something dark a long way down the beach toward the spit, bobbing up and down in the surf. I pointed it out to Stimson. "What is that?" I asked.

"One of our casks, by jiminetty! And we may need it, Bob. Come on and we'll bring it ashore."

We rescued the cask and found another among the rocks at the end of the reef and a third farther along the shore. One was badly demolished, but Stimson said he could repair it, and with these we might make

the raft almost as good as new. Then we walked along the beach, going as the compass showed us, in a general easterly direction. We had evidently been cast ashore on the north coast of this island, and we were now rounding that deep indentation that had caused me to think we had passed the land on the last night on the raft. It curved to the south and east in a long line of sand-dunes, small hills blown up from the beach by the winds.

When we had come to the most southerly part of the curve we found that here was the mouth of a small river which Stimson supposed to be our stream. If so it had grown in size, for it was more than fifty feet wide where it came out of the woods through a narrow defile and spread itself over the beach sands. On beyond the river the woods ceased, and there were high bluffs that came close to the sea, and behind these bluffs were mountains. The mouth of the river was about five miles from where we had landed the raft.

We decided to explore up the river and did make a start, but before we had gone a half mile gave it up. It was getting late in the afternoon and the traveling was too rough. The forest was almost impenetrable and we were obliged to wade much of the way. Sometimes we were in water up to our waists. So we turned back, the captain explaining that our defeat was only a temporary setback and we would try it again with more daylight before us. "We had better come downstream from our camp," he suggested. "I am confi-

dent that this is our brook and that it swings around the base of that spur there. Another creek must branch in somewhere below our camp and that adds the water to make up this river. We'll see for ourselves though, some day soon."

We were so long making down the creek that we soon found that it would be dark before we could reach camp. We hurried along the beach as rapidly as we could but the sun had sunk before we reached the raft and our trip through the wood was made in the darkness of night, I holding on to the captain's belt. How he guided himself I do not know, but we finally saw a lightening through the trees and came out in our opening with the stars shining above and our tent showing a white spot in the middle. As we approached it, I saw a figure glide from it and then another and the silence was broken by a great howl. Stimson broke into a run. "Come on, Bob! The monkeys have captured us," he shouted and dashed into the tent. It was a wreck. When we had lighted a torch and could see the damage done we were appalled. Flour, coffee and sugar were scattered and tramped into the ground. Our pans and kettles had been bent and mangled. Stimson's kit had been opened and most of his clothing torn into shreds. Everything was topsy-turvy, a mess that was sickening to us who had preserved with so much care and through such vicissitudes these important requirements of life and comfort on the island.

"Serves me just right," said Stimson gloomily, cast-

ing the light of his torch over the wreck. "I knew there were howler monkeys in these parts, and I knew what mischief they will do if given the chance. I invited them in by leaving things where they could get at 'em. Well, Bob, thanks to me, we are going without coffee and sugar hereafter and bread and flapjacks are a thing of the past."

"Not quite so bad as that, Captain," I replied. "Here is half the sack of flour and part of the coffee left. We'll be able to pull quite a bit out of this mess when we can see to get at it. Let's have supper now, anyhow."

"Good boy, Bobbin! That's the spirit! I see you have nerve, all right. It's a pretty hard knock, but there's no use crying over spilled milk—or spilled flour and coffee. Build a fire and I will mix up some batter cakes out of the remains, and to-morrow we will hunt a substitute for flour. There should be breadfruit on this island; breadfruit, plaintains and pineapples. Ever eat a breadfruit, Bob?"

I had not or ever seen one, but I was confident that the island could take care of all our needs. We had found fish, game and chickens; there were fresh laid eggs in the woods; and my faith in the producing qualities of the Galapagos was becoming unlimited. Our sugar was gone; we would find sugar. When the coffee gave out, we would discover a coffee plantation. When our clothes wore away we would find woolen mills, cotton gins, or at least substitutes for these

clothes-producing factories. The island was an inexhaustible mine of the necessities and superfluities of life, so I thought, and I had no worries of the morrow.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT WHITE LIGHT

THE salving of the wrecked provisions was our first care in the morning, and we gathered from the ground all the coffee and so much of the sugar and flour as was not mixed with the dirt. I washed the coffee carefully in the stream, placing it in the sun to dry, for it might serve us when the balance of the supply was exhausted; but most of the sugar and flour was a total loss.

"We will build a cache, so that we will not suffer this way again," said Stimson, who still blamed himself for the negligence that allowed the monkeys access to our stores. "A dug-out, such as is used by the ranchers in the west States, will be easy of construction and should be animal proof. Ever handle a pickaxe, Bob?"

I had not, but I was willing to learn; so I shouldered the pick, while the captain took the axe and shovel, and we went up-stream to where the bank of the creek rose abruptly. Here, Stimson said, was the proper slope of ground for our dug-out, and he laid out a rectangle, eight by twelve feet, one narrow end facing the stream and about three feet above it; the opposite end being at least twelve feet above the water. This we gradually leveled, cutting into the hill from its lower end, piling the dirt taken from the hole on the bank beside it. So that, when completed, we had three walls of a level floored room back and sides, all six feet high.

It was hard work and a warm day; but each day I was growing more used to hard work and the hot sun, my muscles were hardening and my wind improving. I stuck to the task until noon, when we had completed more than half the cut and Stimson insisted on knocking off for lunch and a rest. I was glad enough of the chance to relieve my tired arms and aching back, and went with him to camp, where we ate a hearty meal and stretched out in the cool shade of the trees. "We will have a dam in the stream at some place where we can hold back water sufficient for a swimming pool," suggested Stimson, as we lay at our ease. "We may just as well have conveniences, and a bath right now would be an attraction to this summer resort. However, the necessaries first. Let's back to our work," and he led the way to our cellar storehouse.

"While you are finishing the excavation, I will cut poles for a front wall and the roof. We will have it done by evening," the captain said. "The rest of the work, after the cut is made, is easy. We will roof on the slant and finish above with a covering of dirt, so that it will shed water. The front will be of logs, with a door of poles, hinged and pegged with wood. No monkeys need apply, eh, Bob?"

It was nearly dark when the pole door was finally closed on our completed cellar with the provisions saved from the "Sally B" inside. I was too tired to care for supper and made but a pretense of eating the meal which the captain cooked. No sooner was it over than I went off into slumber, and for the first time since I was a very small boy, walked in my sleep.

I remember that when I was five or six years old, mother had lots of trouble with my sleep-walking propensities, and many a fright had I given her by my agility in climbing to dangerous places in my dreams. But this habit I had seemingly outgrown. The strain of the day's unusually tiring exertions must have brought a recurrence of the disease,—I suppose it is a disease—for some time late that night when Stimson, too, was soundly sleeping, I crept quietly from my blanket, out of the open tent, up the creek to the new dug-out, and there started right up the side of the steep hill. And all the time I was sleeping so soundly that I do not even remember what I was dreaming.

It must have been some time after my leaving the

camp that the captain, awaking by chance, discovered my absence. He was frightened, of course, and calling out to me without answer, began a search. He never thought of my walking while asleep, and when he had called to me all around the little opening without getting a reply, he decided that something or other had stolen me. He lit a big fire for light and made systematic hunt for signs of me.

In his circling around the tent, widening out each time, he finally reached the dug-out and first found my footprints in the soft earth of the new roof. From these, he knew that I was alone and had climbed up the bluff. He could not understand it at all, why I should do such a crazy thing as to climb those steep rocks in the black of a moonless night, but he could follow, and he did. It was a great deal harder climbing for him than for me, who did not know I was climbing and cannot remember now how I ever did it; but he made it, and came out on the summit of the bluff where we had planned that our signal staff and fire should be placed.

I was not in sight, but there was something else which would have interested him more deeply if he had not been so anxious about me. It mystified him none the less, for it was that same blue white light on the horizon of the sea, big, bright and piercing, away off to the southwest. He could see it all the while he sought for me, and all that time it remained stationary as a star. But he knew it was not a star, for every

star in the heavens was obscured by clouds. It was some light of land or of sea, incomprehensible to him, shrouded in mystery.

My footprints were no longer visible on the hard turf of the cape, although he searched with his torch for a sign of the tracks. The plateau was but little more than a quarter mile long, and he could have seen my figure in silhouette against the sky, even in the dim, night light. I had disappeared completely.

Clear to the end of the jutting plateau, where the sea broke on the rocks in a tumult of surf and spray, he made his way and there he found me. I had climbed down a crevice in the cliffs and was sitting on a wet rock just above the spume of the breakers. Clad only in shirt and drawers, an imaginary fish-pole in my hands, I was evidently having great success as an angler of dream fish, frequently hauling in heavy ones that required great effort. If Stimson had not been so frightened at my perilous position, he must have laughed at the solemn manner that I baited and cast an imaginary hook into the water, waited for a bite, and jerked when it came, took off my prey and strung it on a twig,—all in a dream that made a quiet stream of the angry sea, a grassy bank in place of the cold rock.

He knew then that I was asleep, had walked in my sleep and was dreaming now; and he knew that if he awoke me there, I would probably drop at once into the waves, never to come up again. It was an impos-

sibility for him to get down to me and bring me safely back with him; that would mean but the loss of both our lives. All that he could do was to wait for me, wait and hope that no great wave would carry me back with it.

So he lay on the top of the bluff above me until I wound the dream line around the imagined pole; lay in fear and trembling. He watched me stand on the narrow shelf of rock above the roaring surge and swirl of angry waters, his heart in his mouth. I could not have kept my place there one moment, had I been awake, for the fear and dizziness of the sea's tumult. But now I calmly bent over, picking up my string of invisible fish, which existed only in my over-tired brain, and climbed easily up as I had come down. I have no recollection of the dream that caused me to do all these strange things; but I have of a great, bear-like hug which greeted me when I came over the edge of the cliff.

"What is the matter?" I asked sleepily, as one just awakened, rubbing my eyes in wonder at where I was.

"It's all right—all right now, Bobby boy! You were asleep, walking in your sleep."

"But where am I? And what is that light—the great light over there?"

He set me down on my feet, feet which were now as cold as ice, and he looked long again at the light which so mystified us. Together we peered at it, forgetting the strangeness of our being there as we were, forget-

ting all else in the wonder of this phenomenon. Then he picked me up in his arms, warming my numb, wet body in his big clasp, and hurried me back to camp. It was only when we were seated by a blazing fire, wrapped in blankets, and I had swallowed a cup of hot coffee, that he spoke of the light, answering my question. "Bob," he said, "I give it up! I don't know and you don't know what it is. I might guess a dozen things, but all I am sure of is that it is not a star or a comet."

"What might it be?"

"It might be a lighthouse, a light-ship or a bonfire; a search-light or a forest fire; a volcano or anything that will blaze big and burn steady. The color, that tinge of blue, makes me think it electricity, but it may be due to some odd kink in the atmosphere. It is the same light that we saw from the raft, Bobby."

I knew that; there was no mistaking it. And I lay awake for a long time after Stimson was breathing hard in sleep, wondering at this white glow on the edge of the sea. If the captain was correct in his belief that it was electrical, then there was human ingenuity directing it and there were people of our own kind within a score or so of miles. We might even signal them by smoke in the daytime or by fire at night. I went to sleep planning ways to communicate with a white spot of light on the sea.

Directly after breakfast, we climbed again to the extremity of the bluff, armed with the binoculars. I

shuddered when Stimson showed me the ledge from which I had fished the night before, and could hardly believe that, sleeping or waking, I had held a foothold on its narrow, slippery surface. From above, we scanned the sea throughout the extended range of the glasses, but it gave back no sign. There was sea and sea only to the horizon line.

In Stimson's eyes I saw the disappointment which he would not speak. He had expected explanation of the mystery of the light; but he took the disappointment with the same courage that had met all our previous difficulties. "It proves to me," he said, "that the light must be an extremely powerful blaze, such as would be caused by electricity or by strong reflectors behind a great glow. I am even more convinced that it is caused by men with modern appliances. But they are a long way from us, Bob. We may not hope to signal so far, either by smoke or fire. Why, they cannot even see the island!"

But we put up our signal staff and built a fire-wood pile that day, nevertheless, ready to signal should any vessel approach within reach of our beacon; and we arranged that each morning one or the other of us should make the short trip to the bluff with the glasses to scan the sea for a sail. "That is the best we can do in the nature of precaution," said the captain; "and we will put in the balance of our time making ourselves a home here, and providing for our comfort. There is no danger from starvation or thirst; very

little, I am sure, of wild animals or wilder men. In fact, Bob, there is not much real difference in our situation here and that of any pioneer in a new country, miles from his nearest neighbor. We must forget that we are forcibly separated from others, and pretend that we are on a camping expedition in some new wilderness."

"Make it play, you mean?"

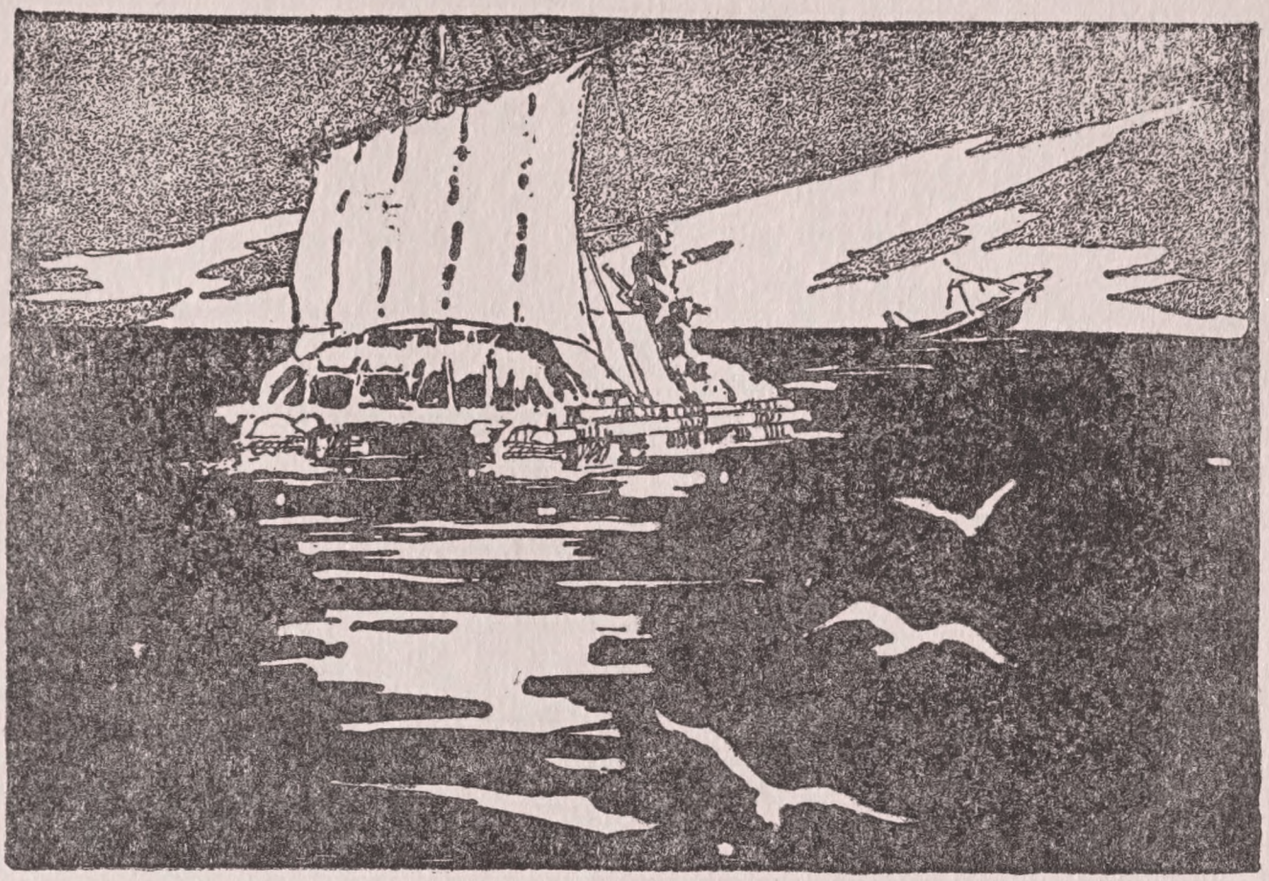
Stimson placed a hand on my shoulder. He was talking with a seriousness that was not his habit, and his words came slowly. "Bob," he continued, "I remember reading 'Robinson Crusoe.' You have read it, too, I suppose?" I nodded. "The thing that struck me most in that remarkable story is the fear of things imaginative that oppressed his life. For years he was in constant horror of terrors of his mind. Do you understand what I mean, lad? When the dangers came, he met them bravely, intelligently, successfully; but he ruined all his peace of mind by anticipating troubles, fearing for his life. We are going to learn from that, eh, Bob? We will meet trouble when it comes, but build none up in our minds to break our spirits."

"Poor Crusoe did not have you with him, Captain," I answered, and he laughed with heartiness.

"Perhaps you've guessed it, Robin. There are two of us, and that's a hundred times more than one. Bad arithmetic, but good philosophy. Well, we will make the most of the conditions here as we find them and be

cheerful every minute that we can. So, to camp and to supper."

That word had a cheerful sound to me, and I knew that there were two fat chickens which Stimson had shot that morning, ready for the frying-pan in the cache. Fried chicken could make any boy forget that he was one of the two inhabitants of a desert island, especially when it was supported by hot stir-bread, baked in a pan tilted before the blaze of the fire, and coffee with plenty of sugar. We might remain on that island for as many years as Robinson Crusoe and, it seemed to me then, I should not greatly regret it. Our little camp with its fire glowing before the tent against the blackness of the night, with the rippling of the stream coming softly tc our ears, all in harmony with the good cheer of well-furnished stomachs, spoke a language to me of comfort and happiness. I did not care to change positions with any boy in the world. There were no clouds on the skies of my future.



CHAPTER IX

THE LAKE BY THE WOODS

"RUN out in the barn-yard, Bob, and bring us some fresh laid eggs," said Stimson next morning, while we still lay rolled in our blankets. The words came to me in the pause between sleep and waking and caused me no surprise.

"Certainly," I replied, jumping to my feet and rubbing my eyes vigorously. Then I laughed. "I forgot we were castaways," I said. "How do you find wild hen's eggs?"

"I just heard one of our poultry give the proud

cry of accomplishment, the 'cut-cut—ca-daw-cut' of victory, down there where we saw them yesterday. That woke me and reminded me that soft-boiled eggs are very nourishing at breakfast time. Did you ever hunt hens' nests in the barn?"

"Many a time. I found one once with twenty-four eggs."

"More than plenty. Hunt these nests just the same way, substituting a wood for the barn and the long grass for hay. I'll start the fire and have coffee and something else ready by the time you get back. Take the shotgun with you, but don't shoot unless it's well worth while. I have an idea for capturing and taming this poultry, and we don't want to make it any wilder than it is, or frighten it off to the hills."

Before I had reached the edge of the wood where we had first seen the chickens I heard them get up and fly away through the trees. I broke through the underbrush where they had been, and found the signs of their roosting place in a dead tree a few rods from the forest's rim. Then I began a careful search among the grass and dead leaves beneath the brush for nests. I had not poked around for many minutes before a wild flurry almost in my face made me jump as though shot. It was another hen, so close to me that I felt the wind of its beating wings as it shot by, flying low through the branches.

That hen had been sitting on a nest when I nearly stepped on her, and in the nest were four eggs still

warm from her body. I placed them in my hat for safety and continued the search. Soon I had found two more nests and added six more eggs to my collection. This seemed the capacity of the hen-house, and I returned to Stimson with the fruits of my expedition.

"Bully doings!" he cried. "Now we will candle them and see if they are fresh."

"They do not seem to lay as many in a nest as our hens up north," I remarked, telling him how I had found them, two and three to the nest. He was holding an egg up toward the sun and squinting through it earnestly.

"This one is too old for our use, Bob," he said, laying the egg aside. "And this is fresh, and this. Another old one." So he surveyed them all, placing six in the good pile and four in the discards. I knew the four that had been turned down were the four that I found first. The hen had been setting.

"Take these right back and put them as you found them, Bob," the captain said. "She will come back to them, and in this warm sun they may not have been injured by removal. We will give her a chance to raise a brood, and we will take care of hen and chicks afterward."

I gathered them carefully in my hat. "But do hens sit on four eggs in the Galapagos?" I enquired.

"Wild hens are apparently not as prolific in eggs as our tame poultry. Way back in the old Egyptian days

where hens are first recorded in history, an egg every six months was the capacity of the fowl. Science has built her up to a producing capacity of more than two hundred eggs a year, and some hens have bigger records than that. The Galapagos bird has the Egyptian beaten, but seems to be away shy of her Petaluma cousin. But run along and by the time you get back I'll have these eggs ready for a test of taste."

The test of eating was entirely satisfactory. The eggs tasted exactly as well as any I had ever eaten and were an addition to our larder of the greatest importance. "We will soon have a chicken yard of our own, Bob," the captain announced, "with nests that will not have to be hunted. But first we must find food for the poultry and food for ourselves. Meat we have in plenty, fish, game and fowl. But we need fruit and a substitute for bread."

"And milk," I suggested.

Stimson laughed. "Trust a boy for wanting the impossible! Have you ever drunk cocoa milk, Bob?"

I had never. "It isn't cow's milk, and it doesn't taste like milk at all, but it is mighty fine and refreshing. I won't promise you even cocoa milk, but that is a chance. To-day we will go hunting milk, also fruit and bread. We will see how this stream becomes a river, Bob."

We set off down-stream, passing my glade of the echoes where I gave a demonstration of its capabilities in that line to the captain, and followed the brook as it

curved and wound around the base of the hills, hugging close to their slope. The canyon was narrow but the decline was not severe and traveling was comparatively easy. Stimson estimated that the height of the brook above the sea at our camp was not more than two hundred feet, and as our compass showed us it was making a wide détour southward there could not be any serious falls if it was the river that we presumed it to be.

Stimson was in front with the rifle, a compass and a pack of luncheon strung in a canvas on his back. I followed with the shotgun and the binoculars, a powder-horn and shot-pouch. We wore no coats, for the day was uncomfortably hot in the narrow canyon, even in the shade. Frequently we rested, drinking the cold water of the brook and watching the many birds that rose at our approach. Some were game birds, but we did not try to kill them, as we had no desire to increase the weight of our packs by another pound.

At two o'clock we were still traveling in a southerly direction. At four the course of the stream turned to the east and Stimson estimated that we had come twelve miles from our camp. We had eaten our luncheon and the chance of our getting back to the tent for dinner was slight, unless we gave over the attempt at once. The captain opposed a return until we found the river's mouth. "We will shoot something or other for dinner, camp by the side of the stream and finish the journey to-morrow," he declared,

and I willingly agreed. He took the spatter gun and brought down a pair of wood pigeons before we had gone a quarter of a mile. "This must be about the last stand of these birds," he said as he picked them up. "The wood pigeon has disappeared entirely from North America, although at one time the birds flew in flocks so thick as to obscure the sun for hours at a time. When I was a boy I remember seeing one of the last of the big flights, and it lasted from before sunrise until nearly noon. Now I understand the Smithsonian Institute has offered a large reward for a wood pigeon's nest. That shows how rapidly they have been exterminated and the need of game laws in a settled country."

"What is that?" I asked, pointing at a glint of water through the trees. "Is that the sea?"

"It can't be," Stimson answered, bending his head to bring it on a level with mine and gazing where I pointed. "The sea is miles from here, and that water is close by. But it is either sea or lake, Robin. Come on! We will find out."

He threw the pigeons into his canvas bag, reloaded the gun and we hurried down the stream. In a few moments we could see before us a wide expanse of water. "A lake!" cried the captain. "A fresh water lake, and a beauty, too! Hurrah! Why, this is almost too good to be true, Bob! I never hoped for such luck. But look out! Don't get into the marsh down there."

"A LAKE!" CRIED THE CAPTAIN

The stream where it entered the lake widened out into a swamp, and in this swamp were growing tall bamboos that looked like elongated corn stalks. "Fish-poles," I cried, pointing, and Stimson smiled.

"Fish-poles and lots more beside," he answered. "Posts, girders and rafters for a house, furniture for it, pails and cups, and casks for our raft. Those bamboo are better for us than a gold-mine."

We skirted the swamp and reached the shore of the lake at a place where the trees ran down so close to the water that the branches were above its surface. Here we could get view of the length and breadth of our body of water and found that it was oval in shape, about a mile long and half that in its widest part. On this side, the easternly, the woods were thick to the water's edge, and the underbrush made of it an almost impassable jungle. But across the water we could see palms growing on a seeming stretch of grass lawn. To the south and behind the palms to the west were the mountains.

"We must cross the lake and make our night's camp over there," said Stimson, indicating with his hand the palm grove, a half-mile away. "It is too late to go back around the bamboo swamp or break through these woods. Can you swim it, Bob?"

I measured the distance with a doubtful eye. "Not if I carry the rifle," I answered.

Stimson laughed. "We'll raft the guns and packs and push them before us and we'll make the shortest

route for the other beach. Come on, Bob; I will help you," and the captain led me back over our trail to the edge of the marsh.

Here he picked out two pieces of broken bamboo, which he bound together with a strip of canvas and on which he tied the guns, glasses, compass, ammunition and all the clothes which we stripped off. Then pushing this before him, he waded out into the lake, I following. It shallowed gradually for several rods, then pitched off abruptly into deep water. Warned by the change in color, Stimson, who was up to his armpits, gave the raft a shove ahead and began to swim. I had been used to swimming in salt water, had learned in the tank baths of San Francisco and had swum in the surf of the Pacific and the waters of its bays. This lake seemed to have no buoyancy. I sank deep in it and it would not support me. It made me struggle to keep my head above, to push my body through it. I swam hard and puffed with the exertion.

"What is the trouble?" asked Stimson, coming to my side.

"It is hard swimming. It does not hold me," I gasped.

"You aren't used to fresh water. Take it easy now, Bob. Get down low in it, just your lips above. All under but your face. That's right. See, now it holds you. Why, you can float in it without moving a muscle! You can't lie on top of fresh water as you might in Salt Lake; you swim through it, not over it.

Got the hang of it now? Then follow me and we'll take it easily going across."

Reassured, I struck out with long strokes, swimming on my side, kicking deep, and found that I made good progress with little more exertion than in the sea. There were no waves to buffet and so no excuse for thrusting head and neck above the surface. In fact it was an easy swim as I became used to the different medium, and in a short time Stimson was leading me in a walk through the shallowed water to the shore.

"Never thought once of alligators," the captain exclaimed as we resumed our clothes. "Just as apt as not to be 'gators in that lake, though they would not bother us, kicking as we were. But before we bathe in it again we'll make a survey for signs of the reptiles."

I was glad he had not mentioned it before we started or while we were making the crossing. Now I looked back over the surface, expecting to see a dozen or more of the wide-mouthed animals of the picture books following our path in. But there was no ripple of the surface.

"It's a pretty little lake," declared Stimson, drying his hair with his hands. "It's just an ideal spot for a home, and if I'm not mistaken, the grove over there has nearly all the requirements of a farm. I think I can promise you a fine dinner to-night, Bob. What would you say to bananas?"

"Are those banana trees?"

"Some of those palms look very like it, and some I might believe were cocoa palms if we were a few thousand miles more to the westward. But we shall know in a few moments. Come on."

We had bananas and a pineapple for dinner. We might have had cocoa milk too, for there were cocoa palms in the grove, but there was no immediate means of getting at the fruit, so high up it was amid the plumes. Stimson promised to gather some in the morning, but now the sun was setting with a sheen of red across the lake. Thousands of birds in great flocks were hurrying to their night trees in the forest or to the feeding grounds in the marsh at the lake's end. Beside a little camp-fire built for the cooking of our pigeons we ate the delicious fruit of the tropics, bananas that had a flavor so different and precious that none knows it who has not plucked the ripe fruit fresh from the trees, and pineapple that seemed nectar.

We had brought no blankets. We lay down one at either side of the fire, for the nights were beginning to have a chill, and Stimson planned the house we should build here beside the lake under the palms. There must be a water-proof roof, for the rainy season was due almost any time now and we might expect frequent showers and storms. He would hunt the nipa, he said, the leaves of which would make perfect shingles. Nipa leaves, bamboo timbers, rattan for

binding, and we should have a hut that would be weather-proof and as comfortable as we could desire.

Our conversation grew intermittent, and I lost track of it at times as my eyes became heavy with sleep. Then the captain stopped entirely and I heard him yawn, sigh comfortably and begin to breathe the regular rhythm of sleep. I was wandering far away into dreamland when I heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of many feet far away. At first it did not mean anything to me, was but a part of my dream, but it became insistent and awoke me. I raised to my elbow, heard nothing and sank back. As soon as my head struck the ground I heard it again, many feet marching in unison. It was a sound of the earth at my ear, not of the air, for when I lifted my head again, it was gone.

I started to wake Stimson, then paused. Might it be I was mistaken, that I had dreamed? I laid my ear to the ground and listened. I was certainly wide awake now, and I heard it; farther away but distinct. I shook Stimson excitedly.

"What is it, Bob?" he cried, immediately alive to his surroundings.

"Some one walking—many people walking," I answered hurriedly. "Put your ear to the ground and listen."

He did as I did. There was no sound now. I waited for many seconds, but could hear nothing. Stimson raised his head first. "Were you not dreaming?" he asked.

"No; I heard."

"Tell me just what," he said, seriously enough.

"It was a long way off," I began, hunting for words to describe it exactly. "There were many feet, keeping step, walking together. It was the sound of a procession passing at a distance."

"Voices?"

"No voices, just footsteps. Men's footsteps."

"Might it not have been a dream?" he asked again.

"No, Captain. At first I thought it might, then I heard it again when I was wide awake, much lower than before, hardly distinct enough to hear. It was marching people."

"In what direction?"

I pointed across the lake toward its farther end. Stimson reached for the rifle, and I heard him throw a cartridge into the chamber. The fire had burned down to embers and these now he extinguished, throwing dirt upon them with his hands. All was dark except for the pale starlight reflecting from the lake.

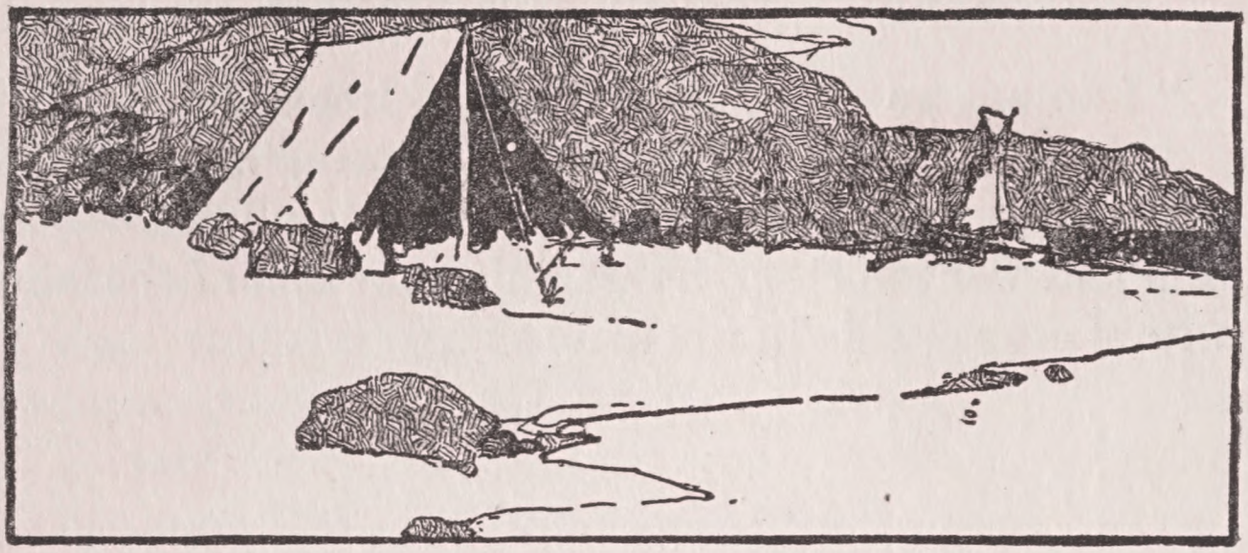
I started to speak again, but he silenced me with his hand on my arm. He was listening. Now and then he placed his ear to the ground, then strained his eyes into the darkness across the lake. A half hour we sat there together without sound, hearing nothing, seeing nothing.

"Go to sleep, Bob," he said finally. "I shall keep watch."

"What was it?" I asked in a whisper.

"I do not know. I hope it was a dream."

I shook my head. "Not that, Captain," I said. "I am sure it was not a dream," but I lay down beside him and went to sleep, he watching the end of the lake with a cocked rifle in his hands.



CHAPTER X

THE DOGS

STIMSON had breakfast all ready before he called me in the morning. Although he had not slept since I awakened him, he seemed as fresh as ever, and sent me for a plunge in the lake before the meal. "I'll give you cocoa milk instead of coffee," he promised, for he had gone back to the swamp and cut a long bamboo, to which he had attached his knife in such fashion that he was able to clip some of the nuts from their stems high up in the palms.

"Did you hear anything more last night?" I asked, as I disrobed for my swim. He shook his head and changed the subject, but I looked long in the direction of the marching feet as I took my bath.

It was Stimson's idea that we should continue down the river to the sea as we first intended, but I was

anxious to explore the lake and he readily agreed that we spend the morning, at least, in finding out what our new possessions held for us. I had brought the fish-line and soon found a place where I could cast into deep water from the shore. While I sought to learn what the lake held in store, he took the shotgun and made a circuit through the grove, intending to come out on the shore at its southern end and meet me there.

I heard him shoot twice before he had gone fifteen minutes, but that was the only indication of his whereabouts. I was catching fish and having wonderful luck, strange fish to me, but evidently ravenous and not afraid of hooks beneath the bait. There was a species of perch with a long upper fin and a small pike which bit hungrily and fought gamely. It was fine sport, and I was sorry when the sun indicated it was time to put aside the line and begin the journey to the lake's end.

I shouldered the rifle, picked up my string of fish and wandered along the pebbled beach. Before me flew a flock of plover, keeping just far enough ahead to be out of my way, alighting to bob about on their slender legs until I came, then flying ahead to a new ground to wait for me. They were so tame that I might have killed them with stones had I wished, but I watched them instead. They were much more gay of color than the Californian plover, rich cousins of the northern family.

At the end of the lake was a slow flowing stream,

deep and wide, the outlet river, and I sat down on its bank awaiting the captain's coming. Whatever I had heard or thought I heard the night before came from near here. If it was men, and that was surely the only explanation of the rhythmic tread, their footprints might be visible in the soft sand of the lake or on the farther bank of this stream. I decided to search, and the first necessity was that I be on the other side of the river.

It was nothing to swim it. I took off my clothes and rolled them into a little pack that I might carry them with me; then I remembered what Stimson had said about alligators. This slow, sluggish river would be an ideal place for the saurians. I hesitated, looking down the river for sight of anything resembling a log floating on its surface. I had never seen an alligator in its native haunt, but I had seen pictures of them, and I began to imagine great, scaly heads with mouths agape, showing monster teeth, lifting from the water. I began putting on my clothes again and was half dressed when Stimson came from the woods, his arms filled with fruits and plants. He dropped them to the ground beside me.

"Been swimming?" he asked, casually. I shook my head. "Going over to the other side, then?" he said, less a question than a deduction from my half-clothed condition.

"I gave up the idea," I answered. I did not like to admit I had been scared out of the idea.

"I was over there this morning," he said, "before you were up."

"Looking for tracks?" I asked quickly.

"Yes. There wasn't a sign. Why didn't you cross?"

I hung my head. "Alligators," I admitted. "I got scared."

Stimson laughed. "Good boy! You're not too scared to admit you were scared, and that's the test of a coward. I was scared, too, and we both have every reason to be cautious, for we have no knowledge of what we are running into here. Keep on being scared and I'll not feel afraid to leave you alone."

That made me feel better and the captain showed me what he had gathered on his exploring trip. He had oranges, mangoes and guavas, mummy apples and a breadfruit. "It will take the place of the flour the monkeys spoiled," he said. "Eat all you want of the fruit, Bob. Try an orange."

"It isn't ripe," I declared, for it was green, not yellow.

"Try it and see."

It was sweeter than any orange I had ever tasted, luscious and juicy. "That's because it ripened on the tree," explained Stimson. "You rarely see an orange picked ripe even in San Francisco. They are plucked long before they begin to change color, and ripen in the box. Over yonder"—he waved his hand to indicate the grove—"is a great garden with coffee, tea,

fruits and berries, almost everything we'll need, Bobbin. Put your lips to that. What does it taste like?" He handed me a piece of cane.

"Sugar," I answered.

"Right you are; sugar cane. Is there anything else in the eating line you think of or want? If so, I'll go back and take another look."

He was enthusiastic and his eyes were gleaming. "Nature may have done all this for the chance castaway," he continued, "but I doubt it. It is too complete, and there are many varieties of plants that do not belong by rights to this section of the globe. It looks to me as though man had a hand in its planting once upon a time."

"Were there signs of any one having lived there?"

"No. It is all wild and tangled, overgrown with underbrush. If my guess is right and it was once a farm, it was many years ago. But that would explain the chickens, Bob."

It would not explain the footsteps I had heard last night, and as I thought of that I remembered I had heard Stimson shoot just after leaving me. He had brought no game back with him. "What did you shoot, Captain?" I asked.

He was rising and his back was toward me. As he made no answer, I thought he had not heard, and repeated the question.

"Snake," he answered shortly; then after a minute, "The snake in the garden of Eden." He laughed

lightly. "Never mind, Bob, there are usually flies in the ointment, you know. That snake will not bother us again, but keep your eyes open for them, mind!"

With a shudder I promised that I would. I had no love of snakes of any kind, and I knew from the tone of Stimson's word that the snake he had killed was venomous. Again I determined to keep my eyes on the ground and watch each step through the jungle grass.

We had made our lunch of the fruits the captain brought from the grove, and now we started on our explorations to follow the river's course. We did not attempt a crossing, continuing along its southern bank in a general easterly direction. As we proceeded Stimson expressed his astonishment at the course of the stream. "We are at least twenty miles from our old camp and still going farther away," he explained. "The mouth of the river which we believe is this river is not more than five miles from camp. Do you suppose this stream takes such a big sweep back as that?"

"It may have to in order to get around those hills. We have been winding around in every direction since we started along it. It doesn't care a bit which way it runs."

We came to an explanation of the matter before we had gone a mile farther, for the stream emptied into a much larger river, flowing north. Even before we saw it, we could hear the roar of its waters as it dashed through a narrow ravine in the mountains. Beyond

it were abrupt cliffs, bare rocks that showed the same formation as the ground beyond the river's mouth. Behind the cliffs were untimbered mountains.

"This, I feel sure, marks the eastern limit of fertility of our island," declared the captain. "Those barren rocks probably run to the coast."

"There may be forests on their eastern slopes," I said.

"No, they are volcanic formation and make the coast line cliffs, I have no doubt. We know the north half of the island fairly well now, for our signal flies at its northwest point and we have explored to its center. What is south of us and along the western coast I haven't a guess, but I am confident there is nothing east but crags and rocks. When we circumnavigate the island ——"

"Are we going to sail around it?" I asked eagerly.

Stimson sat down in the shadow of a rock where he could look down on the swift running river, dashing madly on its way to the sea. "Bob," he said, "we are going to be here some time, I am thinking, for we are way off the course of the steamers, and outside the line of the coast traders' route. The nearest of the South Sea groups that is civilized is several thousand miles to the west; Ecuador is six hundred miles east. To attempt either one by any means in our power is too hopeless to consider, so we are probably located here for a long enough period to figure on it as permanent. We'll accept that as fact, Bob, and we'll make it a

home and have the best kind of a time possible while we are here. We'll have no mourning or regrets, no tears or sad faces. We are sure of food, for there are fish, birds and even chickens, and I have no doubt deer, goats and other eatable beasts, besides the best of fruit and vegetables. But before we settle down to home building and a satisfied permanent residence, we must know for certain that there are no residents of this island and no other island close by that is occupied. So we will fix up the raft in a way that will give us a manageable boat and ——"

Stimson was interrupted by the barking of a dog. It seemed so natural to me, unused as I was to the uncommonness of commonplaces in the midst of the wilderness, that I might not have noticed the distant sound, half drowned by the roar of the stream. But I was watching the captain's face as he talked and the look that came over it as he heard the barking was so expressive of astonishment that it set my heart quaking.

"It is a dog," I said, and the thought came to me at my words—why was a dog there in the Galapagos?

"It is dogs—two dogs. Jiminetty! Dogs—here? Can there be dogs where there are no men? There are wild hens—are there wild dogs, too?"

"Maybe wolves," I suggested timidly, looking up the canyon of the stream where the barking was becoming louder every moment.

"Wolves, no! Dogs—plain, every-day dogs! They are as different in their barks as a cow and a fog-horn.

I know 'em. These are house dogs, Bob, and they are out on a hunt."

"Then there must be men on the island."

"That we have got to find out, and find out quickly —to-day, this afternoon. Suppose we have been mooning around thinking that we are lonely shipwrecked castaways on a desert island while a village of men with bakeries and milk cows are a half dozen miles away! What fools we should be!"

"Suppose they should be Indians?"

"No, Bob, we are not going to suppose anything. We are going to find out. If there are any stray natives on these supposedly uninhabited islands we are as anxious to know it before they know we are here as if they were a colony of white men. We are going to find those dogs first and then take a general view of this island from as high up that mountain as we can get. Carry all of that fruit that you can lug and give me the rifle."

Stimson was really excited, which he rarely was. We set out up the river in the direction of the still sounding, snapping barks of the dogs. I could tell now that there were two, one bark being pitched in a much higher key than the other, and they were coming down the canyon of the stream. It was hard traveling. Every few rods there was a wall of rock that we had to scale, and it was up, up, all the time. I was so badly winded at the end of the first quarter hour that I called to Stimson to wait for me and sat down to rest.

The Dogs

It was much hotter here in the canyon than it had been on the lake's shore, and I was bathed in perspiration. I put my face deep in the brook and washed my chest and arms with the cold water. Stimson took occasion to follow my example and, rested somewhat, we resumed the climb.

There was no doubt that the dogs were getting nearer to us now. When we first heard them they must have been miles away, for even now they were not in sight and we could see for some distance up the canyon. Stimson had stopped at this comparatively open place and we arranged ourselves to meet the dogs behind a large rock. There was to be no shooting unless he fired first, and we waited with cocked guns while the chase in full cry came bounding toward us.

With great leaps down the steep mountainside came a frightened deer, head high in air, nostrils quivering and great eyes wide in terror. It passed us like the wind, never noticing our nearness, and we watched for its pursuers at the place where it had broken into the open. A minute later and they came into view, two big dogs running with noses close to the ground, baying at every leap. Stimson stepped from our concealment directly in their path and cried to them in Spanish, words of command which I did not understand. They saw him and paused for a minute, their baying stopped. Then, with angry barks, they dashed directly for him.

I never supposed a Mauser rifle could spit lead so

quickly. I shot a load of bird pellets at the rear canine as rapidly as I could pull stock to shoulder; then three spurts of flame from the muzzle of the captain's rifle, seemingly coming all together, and the two dogs were rolling on the ground in their death agonies. "Wild as wolves," said Stimson calmly. "I don't believe that they ever saw man before in their lives. I was just a new kind of animal to them and they thought I was good to eat. Dogs they are, but if there are many of them on this island we shall have to look after ourselves more carefully than if they were panthers. Wild dogs are no joke!"

We were looking over the carcasses as he spoke, and they were evidently a mongrel breed of dogs, short haired, with long tails and hanging ears, somewhat larger and much stronger than a deerhound. "How did they come here?" I asked. "Dogs are not naturally wild animals, are they?"

"No. There isn't a trace anywhere of a primeval dog. There is the dhole of India and the dingo of Australia, both wild dogs, but they are known to be descended from domestic animals. Dogs will become wild after a generation away from man, but they must have had their start, parents or grandparents or further back, from the house dog. If there are not men on this island now, there have been some time in the past, and they brought the forebears of these dead brutes over from the mainland."

"You are not sure yet that there are no men here now?"

"Not satisfied, no. Pretty well convinced that these dogs have had no masters, yes. It leaves us practically where we were before, not sure of anything. We will skin these brutes, for their pelts will be useful to us in the making of clothes later on, and we will then climb the mountain to some place where we can overlook a part, at least, of the island."

With our knives we fell to, Stimson showing me the way, and soon had the skins removed from the two carcasses. Then we resumed our climb, finding the ascent more abrupt beyond this open space. We made slow progress, hanging on to brush and wedging our feet into the crevices of the rock, but every step was a gain in altitude. We had kept to the stream's course and had been all the time among the trees of the wood, but now all underbrush disappeared. We were beyond the river's source and above the timber line. Nothing but rocks and the jagged tops of the mountains showed above us.

All the west side of the island lay beneath us within range of our eyes. Far to the north we could see the bluff where our signal pole stood and the glass showed us the flag still waving. That was the northwestern tip of our possessions.

CHAPTER XI

THE MARCHING FEET

HAD we not been so late in starting our ascent of the mountain we would have had some advantage in our investigation, for now the sun lay close against the horizon of the water and cast a stream of light across the sea that was dazzling. It told us, too, that night was but a short while ahead and we must make preparation for it. Without more than a casual survey of the topography of the land, we began the gathering of fire-wood and the preparation of our evening meal.

The night was cool here, a thousand or more feet above the sea's level, and we had no blankets. There was a brisk breeze from the southwest and we found a sheltering rock to windward behind which to make camp. Fire-wood was brought up from below, and we gathered enough for a fire in the night, which gave us

comfort during the long hours that we could not sleep. I had but little rest, what with the cold and the hard rocks of my couch, and Stimson slept in cat-naps.

At daybreak we were up and at our task of surveying the island. There was no delay for breakfast, as all our provisions had been eaten. With the binoculars, Stimson studied the land as it lay below us, while I marked down on a sheet taken from the log-book a chart of the coast. It was sunrise, and the clouds were opalescent, pearl, rose and olive, in the west. Beneath, the sea reflected their colors in paler tints. Closer yet was the yellow and green of the long slope that ended at the mountain's base; yellow in its seared meadows and green where the trees grew around the watercourses.

But nowhere on sea or land was there sign of human habitation or human visitation. From this height Stimson sought that place in the sea where we had seen the blue white light the night I walked in my sleep. As far as eye could reach or the glasses carried sight, there was no break in the expanse of the sea. Neither was there on the island to the west and north any sign of smoke from camp-fire or chimney. It was all deserted except for the animals and birds of the forests.

"We are alone on the island, Bob," the captain declared with finality after an hour's study. "There is no other man here but us."

"We still have the southern end and the east coast

beyond the river's mouth," I suggested, for I had yet in mind the sound of tramping feet that came through the earth to my ear. "There's yet a chance, Captain."

Stimson smiled. "We'll make certain when we circumnavigate the island," he said, "but I am convinced now. Shall we get back to the pineapple and banana orchard and have breakfast?"

I was glad of the suggestion and we went down the mountain much more expeditiously than we had climbed it, and were soon at the point where the streams converged. Here we had left a supply of fruit, and while I made a fire Stimson wandered back up the stream toward the lake, promising to return with game by the time I had coffee boiled. He was better than his word, for I heard the gun boom before he was five minutes gone, and he was as quickly back with a half dozen of the plover I had seen along the lake shore before. These we broiled over the coals and made a hearty meal.

"Bob," said the captain when we had completed, "you may take your choice, either back up the stream to camp or down the river to its mouth and back by the beach. I don't care. We are satisfied now that this is the river that enters the sea at the bay, and to travel down it is useless. As for distance, one route is probably about as long as the other. Which shall it be?"

I chose the new land, the river route, just because it was new. Before we had gone a mile on its course I was sorry of my choice. The river ran between steep

banks and progress was difficult on these side hills. In places we were able to wade along the stream's bed, but these were few and short, for most of the way the river ran deep and strong. It was noon when we came out upon the beach five miles from our camp.

That afternoon we packed ready for removal. That night we slept for the last time in our V-tent beside the stream. In the morning I visited our signal flag and surveyed the sea with the binoculars. Then we started down the stream, our camp equipage on a litter between us, making for our new home on the banks of Lake Plentiful.

I had named the lake. Stimson suggested that we should save misunderstandings, now that we had so many possessions, by giving them names. "It was all right to say 'The stream' when there was but one stream or 'The bay,' if there were not so many bays along this coast. But as we are the discoverers and therefore have the right, and as there are going to be more and more places to get mixed up over, let's start in now and name those that we have. I suggest 'Wreck Bay' as the name of the cove where we came ashore."

"And 'Coral Bay' for the one where the river flows in, the bay of the coral spit," I assisted.

"'Signal Point' goes naturally with the bluff where the flag stands, and this stream we might call 'Howler Creek.'"

"Because of the monkeys?" I asked. "It isn't a very pretty name for such a pretty stream."

"Then you suggest a name."

"Let's call the lake 'Lake Plentiful' and the stream 'Comfort Creek.'"

"And the river?"

"'Roaring River,' on account of its noise."

So we had names for almost everything and found it much easier to refer to them that way, after we got used to it. We went down Comfort Creek as we had before, only we crossed to its western side just before we came to Bamboo Swamp so that we need not again swim the lake. We had started early, and there was time enough before dark to get up our tent and make an excursion into the grove for fruit.

Stimson and I went together, for he was afraid of our being separated until we had more thoroughly explored the grove, and I, remembering the snake he had shot, was glad enough to have him by with the shotgun. But I soon forgot all about snakes in the beauty of the trees. These were mostly palms, some tall and straight with feathery tufts of leaves at their very tops, others short and clumpy with great wide hanging leaves starting almost at the bottom. I soon saw what I thought were bananas on one of the smaller palms and called the captain's attention to them.

"Plantains," he declared. "See, Bob? The fruit of the plantain points upward on the stem and is reddish in color, while the banana hangs down and is yellow. But that plantain is even a more valuable discovery than the banana, for it is better and more

nourishing food. Bake or boil them and you'll believe you are eating sweet potatoes."

"And there is a muskmelon growing on that tree!"

The captain laughed. "That is breadfruit, Bob. We will have one baked to-morrow. I'll show you. And then I will make up a batch of poi of the breadfruit, bananas and cocoa milk. I think you will forget any craving for wheat bread when you have learned to know poi."

We located a place for our house among the trees some ten rods back from the lake, beside a little spring of ice cold water, and the next day we began construction. First we leveled off a piece of ground twelve by sixteen feet, digging out the mould and sod until we came to solid earth. This, beaten hard, would be our floor. At each corner we dug a hole and planted bamboo uprights showing ten feet above ground.

The roof we constructed in four sections on the ground, each piece a triangle of bamboo, woven tightly with split bamboo and tied with rattan soaked in the lake until it was almost as pliable as rope. Over this framework, laid on like shingles, or more like thatch, we made a three-ply covering of nipa leaves, each leaf being about three inches wide and two feet long. Then with arduous labor we hoisted up our sectional roof and strung it by rope and rattan to the wall posts.

It was several days' work before we had the roof completed and up and the side walls woven with split

bamboo. We had left window and door openings, but as we had no glass we decided to have canvas curtains at the former and use a part of our raft to build a firm, strong door for the latter. Except for this door, there had not been a nail used in the entire construction of the house, but the rattan bindings of the joints dried hard, shrinking to tightness in the process, and when all completed the hut was strong enough to withstand almost any wind that might blow.

In the meantime I had eaten my first meal of poi. Stimson illustrated how the Kanakas ate the glutinous mess by sticking a forefinger into the pot and dexterously twirling the stringy poi that clung to the finger into such shape that it might be placed in the mouth, but I did not like the methods of the South Sea islanders half as well as I did their food. Poi was good, but I preferred it cold when it hardened, and could be cut into slices like cheese.

It was one day shortly after the house was finished that we woke up in the morning to a driving rain that beat hard down on a stiff southwestern gale. There had been nothing the day before to indicate the end of summer, and it was only Stimson's general knowledge of climatic conditions in these latitudes that found us as well prepared as we were. We had dry fire-wood and a supply of fruit, plantains and breadfruit, so there was no need to wander forth in the drenching rain, and we kept to the hut and passed the day weaving a coarse mesh for the chicken yard

fence, while the skies emptied on our nipa leaf roof and cleansed and sweetened the trees of the grove.

I was aroused that night from deep sleep by Stimson's favorite ejaculation, "Jiminetty!" and found him sitting up in bed beside me.

"What is it?" I whispered, but he silenced me with a stern "Hush!" Then I heard what I had heard one night before, the tramp of many feet over and above the noise of the rain on the roof.

The camp-fire in the center of the hut had burned down to embers, but by its dim light I could see Stimson's eyes grow round with astonishment and his hand reach for the rifle which always stood close to his bed. Then he moved slowly, cautiously, to the hut's door and opened it, I following.

The sound was clearer now, and it was unmistakable. Footfalls of slow plodding men, a score or more of men, walking in step, going away from us. Again I started to question Stimson, but he motioned me quickly to silence. Into the night that his eyes were attempting to pierce I gazed, seeing naught but the dense blackness, and as we peered the sound lessened and died away into the dripping of rain-drops. "Jiminetty!" breathed Stimson again and he closed the door.

"What was it?" I asked, my voice low.

Stimson sat down on his bed, still grasping the rifle. "Bob," he answered, and there was amazement in his voice, "anywhere else, that would be infantry marching. Here, I haven't a guess as to what it was. The

feet of many men would make that sound, but what else could—and it must be something else—I don't know. Go to sleep again, Bob ; go to sleep."

But it was many hours before I could sleep.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE NICK OF TIME

FOR four days it rained all day and all night, then the sun came again, first shyly peeping through a rift in gray clouds that waved it back with a final shower. An hour later it was out in its strength, sucking up the moisture and warming the sands and foliage of the trees.

We burst from our prison with cheers and were soon at work building a chicken yard, gathering more fuel and stores of fruit and supplies. Then the storms returned with added intensity. It was the afternoon of the second day inside the hut that Stimson, gazing from the window, cried, "Ducks, Bob! Bring the gun!" and ran from the hut.

It was a large flock of mallards coming in on the wind. They had evidently sighted the refuge of our lake and made down for it on whirring wings as Stim-

son with the rifle and I with loaded shotgun dived into some bushes close to the beach. Swinging in a wide circle, they took the water up the lake near Bamboo Swamp.

The rain soaked us to the skin as we crouched in the wet brush. It was not warm rain, either, such as the first storm had been, but held the chill of winter in the north. We had seen ducks before on the lake, teal, widgeon, red-heads and other kinds which neither of us knew, but only in pairs or small flocks. Here were mallards, a hundred or more, closely bunched, and it was too good hunting to be given over for cold or wet.

I suggested that we make a circuit and approach the ducks from the marsh, but Stimson counseled patience. "Stay right where you are, Bob," he commanded. "Keep the breech of your gun beneath your coat to keep it dry, and smile if you can. It isn't pleasant waiting, but we're sure to get a shot into them sooner or later, for they'll come by us, as certain as fate!"

We could hear them quacking among themselves, talking things over at the end of the lake. The wind was from the north and strong, so that to hold their position against it the ducks were obliged to keep paddling. Stimson argued that they would sooner or later take the easier way and blow down past us. "Those birds are tired out, Bob. They have probably flown from San Francisco Bay or the Suisun marshes in the last week, and they need rest and quiet. By and by they'll be on their way with the wind behind them."

It required patience to wait with the rain running down our necks and shivering along our spines. But Stimson only laughed and shook his head when I suggested that I go around and get beyond them, hurrying them along. "They'll come," he declared.

And they did. The flock parted, a dozen or more breaking away, heading toward us. Then all seemed to realize that the minority was in the right and the great flock came down the lake. "Aim for the near side of the bunch where it is thickest and fire both barrels," commanded the captain. "I will give the word."

The leaders went by us not ten rods away, blowing swiftly. As the main body of the flock came alongside I aimed into their midst and as Stimson said "Fire," pulled both triggers. The recoil was tremendous, and I sat down hard in the bushes. I heard the Mauser spit three times spitefully, heard the whir of many wings, and looked out on the scene of carnage.

There were a dozen puffs of feathers afloat on the ruffled surface of the lake and there were three lame ducks trying to get away. One was swimming in a circle; another, with a broken wing, tried to fly and failed to lift its body from the water. We waded out and Stimson gathered up the dead while I chased the wounded.

The duck that could neither swim nor fly I caught easily, and quickly wrung its neck, but the broken winged bird made a rush for deep water at a speed that

there was no chance for me to equal. "Shoot him again," I called to Stimson, who was now ashore.

"Not a bit! We want those two cripples alive for our poultry yard," the captain answered. "Wait; I am coming for them."

Then I saw the third wounded bird away down the lake and Stimson was running along the shore keeping abreast of it. As he ran he shed his clothing, wet now as it could possibly be, to soak in the rain on the beach. I waded ashore and watched him, laughing.

The crippled duck was getting into the narrow portion of the lake, keeping far over to the other side. Stimson waded out and began to swim toward it quietly at an angle, to head it off. The duck, seeing his head approach, turned and made an effort to fly, but it was useless, and it began a return swim up the lake. The other lame bird was close to the farther bank opposite me.

For the next fifteen minutes I watched as interesting an exhibition of swimming as I ever care to see. Stimson would try to capture first one duck and then the other, allowing them to quiet down after each fright. He employed strategy, swimming under water much of the time, but the ducks seemed to know just where he was either above or below, and they could swim twice as fast as he. I stood on the shore in the cold rain and laughed, although I might have been assisting if it had not been such fun. I expected that Stimson would give it up and call to me to shoot the cripples,

but he had no such idea. With infinite patience he would start again his cautious approach of a duck, making no useless lunges or splash, giving over his attempt so soon as the bird was in full retreat, and beginning on the other.

Part of the time he was in shallow water, and at these intervals secured rest for the next attempt. Soon I noticed that he was getting nearer the bird before it took fright; and at last I saw him make a dive and in a twinkling the duck, with a loud squawk, was dragged out of sight. One had been captured by the legs. Holding it high in one hand, the captain swam and waded to me.

"Take this one up to the hut and shut it in," he told me. "I'll have the other by the time you get back."

He was as good as his word, for I passed him running to the house with a green-headed drake squawking in his hand. "Pick up my clothes, if you will, Bob, and then come in quick. We will build up a fire and then look after the wounded. It's the beginning of our barn-yard."

Very carefully he dressed the broken wings of the two mallards, binding them up in linen from one of my handkerchiefs, while they quacked and fluttered in fright. When the operation was complete, he clipped the wings of both of them and took them out to the chicken pen, turning them loose within.

We were so proud of our live stock that we could

not keep away from them long. A half dozen times that afternoon one or the other of us went to the coop to see that the ducks were still in the sheltered corner. We sprinkled dried poi before them and seeds from the papaya, but they would not eat.

"We will begin trapping chickens to-morrow," declared Stimson. "These birds need company. They are sore and lonesome. We shall have to find some hens to make it seem like a barn-yard."

"But these ducks were never tame?" I asked.

"No. Ducks are just as naturally wild as chickens are domestic. The tame mallard is the wild bird domesticated, while the tame hen never was wild. Do I make myself clear?" and Stimson assumed the air of a college professor.

"As clear as mud. Why is a hen?" I countered.

"Never mind the why, but where is a hen? Preferably a hen and a brood of chicks. I wonder if that fowl whose eggs you took, and gave back, has hatched yet?"

"We might go up to the old camp and find out."

"Not in this storm. Comfort Creek is probably running torrents and Roaring River is living up to its name so hard that you can hear it above the storm. What we will do is to set some snares at the edge of the grove where I found signs the other day."

We built snares that night out of twisted thread, slip nooses that a chicken might place a foot in carelessly and pull taut, and the next morning we arranged

them along the branches of the tree which served as a roost for the flock. It was a simple contrivance, but before the week was over we caught three hens and a cockerel in the snares and they were soon quite at home, their wings clipped, in our poultry pen. The ducks, too, had begun to eat as their wounds healed, but they were still much more shy than the chickens, and kept in the far corner of the yard when we were by.

The rain lasted this time for a whole week, and our employments were confined greatly to the hut. Even the trip to the chicken pen meant soaked clothing and the necessity of drying off before the big fire at the back of our house. We had no fireplace, but behind the hut we had built up rocks in such a manner as to make a semicircle that threw back the heat against the wall, and here, sheltered by the eaves, we might stand and absorb the warmth. It was a discouraging affair starting a fire in the rain, however, and we promised ourselves that there would be an inside fireplace just as soon as the weather gave us opportunity to build one.

I was extremely anxious to go to the old camp, and I offered many reasons for undertaking the journey, but the captain vetoed them as rapidly as I advanced them. I wanted really to get the bundle of books and papers that we had taken from the "Sally" and which now lay, along with much of our salvage from the schooner, in the dug-out beside the creek. I did not like to tell Stimson that I was aching to read, needed the sight of print more than I needed food, as it sounded silly to

me and I feared would seem worse to him. But that was the case. These long rainy days had brought back my hankering for books and I felt that I would be quite happy if I could only have a chance to lie on my couch beneath the window with a book and hear the rain pattering on the roof.

Stimson would not go up the stream for the chickens, not even if he believed that the hen had come off with her babies; he would not go for salt pork when our supply gave out; he would not attempt the journey for the sake of more powder and shot for the spatter gun; so how could I expect him to go for the matter of some old newspapers and novels from the captain's cabin? That bundle still lay as it had been wrapped up on the raft with canvas about it, never as yet opened; and to my imagination it contained all the jewels of Aladdin's cave. I yearned for the printed pages.

One morning when there was little to do, when we had fed the poultry and cleaned up the house, when Stimson started to feel around for some new task to keep us busy, I spoke my mind. "I want to read," I said dismally.

"And so do I," was the captain's unexpected response. "That is just what I have been yearning for without knowing what it was I wanted. What became of those books we took off the schooner?"

"They are up in the dug-out."

"Then we'll have to get them. Besides, we need pork and ammunition. Let's start right away and we

can sleep there in the cellar to-night and come back to-morrow. It will be a damp trip, but we are used to the wet."

It was a damp trip! Comfort Creek was way out of bounds and its name was a misnomer. We were obliged to travel the side hills, breaking trail through wet underbrush while all the way a deadly dreary rain came steadily down upon us. I had wrapped the locks of the shotgun in a bit of canvas before leaving and this important part of the weapon was the only thing dry about us. Our hats dripped water in streams, our clothes ran with wet, our boots sogged like pulp. I trusted that my tin powder-flask, carried beneath my coat, was water-proof. At any rate Stimson's cartridges were. We always looked first to our weapons and ammunition in this wilderness of ours.

The way was lengthened and made difficult by the rain, our progress hindered. We were a long way below the old camp when darkness set in, but there was nothing to do but go on. We could not lose our way in the ravine with the stream sounding a guiding roar all the time, but we stumbled and floundered about, making slow headway, bumping into trees and falling over logs.

Suddenly I heard a call in the night, a long cry in the distance, and Stimson, ahead, stopped in his tracks. I fell against his back—it was too dark for me to see him—and he grasped my arm to keep me from falling. "A dog," he said, answering my unspoken question; but he did not go on. "Hush!" he cautioned.

There was an answering call nearer than the first, then another and again, unmistakably the howling of dogs. I felt an immediate relief from the fear that had clutched my heart in that first wail through the dark. Dogs were accustomed animals; let them howl.

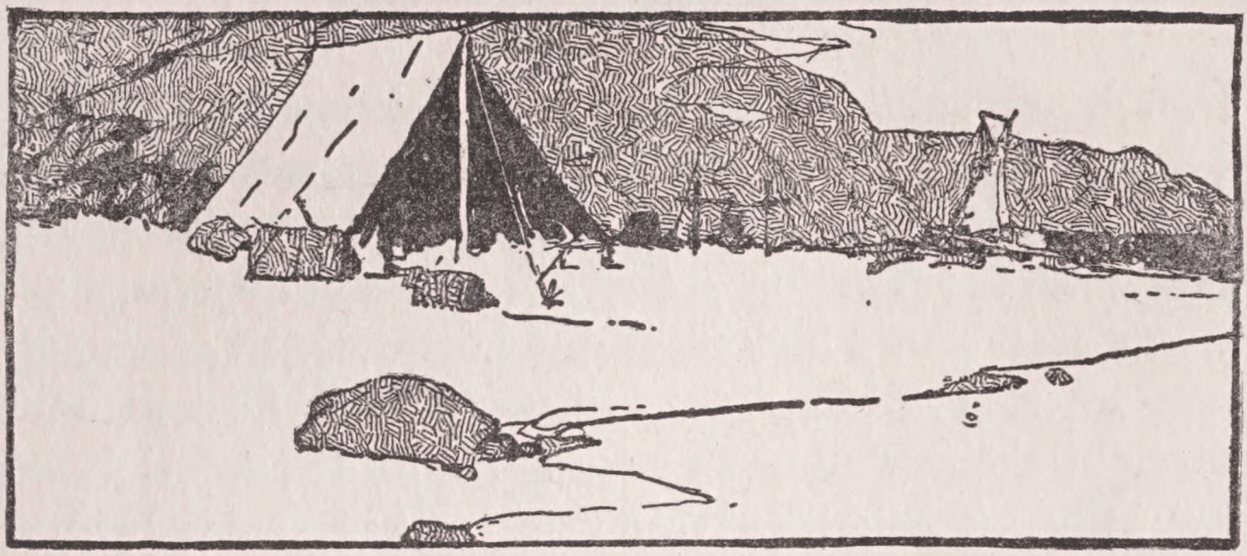
"Come, Bob. We must run for it. Keep close behind me, and if I go faster than you can make it, call me back. But do your best to keep up. There is one chance for us, and that is to make the dug-out. Now run!" The captain's voice gave me graver apprehension than the howling of fifty dogs.

I ran; and it was a fearful run, broken by stumblings and collisions and punctuated by the baying of dogs growing momentarily louder and nearer. I remembered the look in the eyes of the deer that had come down the river's course chased by the dogs and I could imagine that my eyes were bulging out and my nostrils were aquiver. Every step I took I expected to hear the breaking of the brush behind me as the dogs came through, and their barking sounded but a few rods away. Then I passed Stimson. I saw his tall form, a little blacker than the black night, and heard him shout, "Good boy, Bobbin! Good lad! We are almost there. Keep at it!" And I heard him splashing behind me.

We were in the glade now, and it was open running. I knew the land, knew where I was, found the trail to the dug-out and increased my speed. Stimson was somewhere behind. I could not see him as I looked

back, nor could I hear him, but I knew he was safe. Then I heard the crack of the Mauser, and I stopped short, jerking with clumsy fingers the canvas from the gun breech. Turning back, I saw the blue spurts of flame from the rifle's muzzle and heard the spit, spit, spit of the discharge. I cocked both barrels and started back. I must be beside him in the fight.

"Run, Bob! Never mind me! I'll be right behind you," the captain called, as though he had guessed my intention, for he could not see me. Even in that moment a feeling of pride came over me that the captain knew that I would not desert him. And I obeyed orders. In another moment I was at the post door of our cellar, tearing away at the rope that bound it, cutting it with my knife; and I held open the door as the captain dashed by and hurled it shut behind him; not tight shut, for there was something between it and the casing, something yielding that snarled and howled as I put one foot against the logs and threw my weight to the closing of the dug-out door.



CHAPTER XIII

FIGHTING THE WILD PACK

STIMSON snatched a match, holding it above his head, and the light revealed the head and paws of a yelping dog caught in the jamb. Outside a dozen more were hurling themselves against the door, but as it opened out, they served only to drive it tighter against the unfortunate animal. "Push it open! now, Bob!" shouted Stimson, and before the light went out I saw his boot land hard in the face of the brute, and I pulled the door tight and fastened it. He had kicked him into the mess of his ravenous companions.

We were both exhausted and panting and we threw ourselves down on the pile of supplies to regain our breath. For a while there was no sound inside but our deep drawn breathing. Then the captain began to chuckle.

"Fooled the nice little doggies that time," he said.

"Talk about wolves, Bob! I'd rather have three packs of Russian wolves after me than that band of pirates! Always in the stories when you shoot one wolf the remainder of the pack stop to eat him, and you get a chance to put space between. But not these dogs! Not a bit! They kept right on while I was plugging them. Seemed to enjoy it. I wonder what they are doing now."

"Probably waiting for us to come out. I've seen dogs around a rabbit hole for hours. We are the rabbits."

"Listen!"

There was a scratching from above. "Trying to dig us out," declared the captain.

"They can't get through the roof logs if they get down to them," I said confidently.

"No, but they can make this place mighty uncomfortable for us by breaking through our roofing. We will be in water to our knees if they get holes in that sod. We must make a fire here, some kind of a light, and stop this."

The scratching continued while we gathered together dried branches and leaves from the corners of the cave and touched a match to them. It was all light stuff and made little smoke. Stimson took the shotgun and went to the door. "You are not going out?" I asked anxiously.

"I'm going to look out. Come here, Bob."

I went to his side and through a crack in the door

peered out into the night. It was bright moonlight now, and there were stars in the sky. The rain was over. "Hurrah!" I shouted, and Stimson gave a great shout of joy.

Before the door, some sitting on their haunches, some gravely trotting back and forth, were a score of dogs as big as the largest of collies. At our shout they laid back their ears and dashed at the door, some bounding hard against it. "No, I'm not going out, even if the weather is fine," said Stimson.

"Doesn't look healthy out there," I grinned.

"The night air wouldn't agree with my delicate constitution," rejoined the captain.

There was a sizzling of our fire that brought us to the right-about in a second. A stream of water was running upon it from the ceiling. "That beast has made an opening," said Stimson. "Now I'll see if I can make one."

He poked the gun-barrel through the hole and felt it touch soft fur; then he pulled trigger. The noise of the explosion in the small cellar was almost deafening. I ran and looked through the crack in the door. There was evident consternation in the ranks of the sentinels. The scratching at our roof ceased.

The leak trickled, dripped and stopped. The fire blazed up again, and we stood near it, regardless of the smoke, and soaked in heat while our clothing steamed. There was little smoke to the blaze and the cracks in the door gave it egress, so we were not uncomfortable.

Now and then Stimson would create a draft by waving his hat.

"I wonder if the dogs will leave when day comes?" I asked.

"They are going sooner than that," the captain replied. "I need sleep, and I can't sleep with them howling around."

"What are you going to do?"

"Give them the only thing they can't stand—fire."

He searched out the bundle of books and papers which we had come through this experience to secure and opened it. From it he took four of the newspapers and rolled them into torch shape, one end of each torch loose and easy to burn, the other end tight rolled to hold in the hand. "Sorry to burn reading matter, but it has to be done," he explained. "And there is plenty more of it. Now to make a bomb that will give us a chance with our torches."

He took a piece of canvas about the size of a handkerchief, into which he poured a handful of gunpowder from my flask. Then he doubled the canvas about the powder, first inserting a fuse made of threads of the canvas rubbed in gunpowder. The canvas was rolled into the shape of a giant firecracker and was tightly bound with string. It was an old-fashioned, home-made firecracker and he knew from experience that it would give both noise and fire.

Carefully he explained to me his plan and the part each should take in its execution. Upon each of our

backs was tied a bundle of dry wood. Then he gave me a torch for either hand and I stood over the fire ready to light them when he gave the word.

He looked through the door's crack at the dogs waiting without, then quietly undid the fastening. The fuse of his bomb was lighted, the door opened and the bomb hurled into the midst of the pack. As it exploded, I pushed my torches into the fire, saw them light, and with a blaze in either hand rushed out, with Stimson, similarly armed, a moment behind. Right into the center of the disorganized pack we ran, thrusting the fire into their faces. They broke with howls and ran. Then I turned to the left and Stimson to the right and made for the top of the dug-out.

It took but a moment to demoralize the remnant of the band who were tearing at the roof sods. They fled at our blazing approach. In another moment the faggots we had carried on our backs were piled and the papers, now burned close down to our hands, were thrust underneath. We had a bonfire that blazed high in the air.

"Fine work!" cried the captain enthusiastically. "Watch the fire, Bob, while I make a foray after more wood. We will pile this up for a big blaze and then get to sleep. I think the dogs have learned their lesson."

There was no more trouble from them that night, and we both slept for a few hours when our clothes dried. Soon after sunrise all traces of the week's

steady rain had disappeared, vaporized by the tropic heat, and we started back for the grove with the books and the remainder of the papers. They were stowed away beneath my couch, unopened, for there was plenty to do while the sun shone and no time to read. First a fireplace, that would give heat and cheer to the hut; and we began it at once.

It was no trouble to find stone for the chimney. There was a variety of rocks along the shore of the lake and we gathered enough in a day for our construction. But mortar was not so easy. Stimson hunted up and down the creek for a clay bank without success and decided that we must make the best of just mud. Then began a series of mud pie experiments with dirt from the shore, dirt from the grove and dirt from along the spring. Small round pats were made, just like the little girls used to make pies out of dirt and water, and allowed to dry. Then their tenacity was decided in the breaking of them.

None of these had sufficient holding qualities to satisfy the captain, and he went farther afield for dirt. On the side of the mountain he discovered red earth; from across the lake he brought brown earth; from the bottom of Bamboo Swamp he dug green earth, and this was what we needed. It dried hard like cement and Stimson announced himself as more than satisfied. Next morning we became stone masons.

In that wonderful head of his the captain carried the rules and proportions of a fireplace, for fireplaces

are delicate matters of rules and proportions, or else they are matters of smoke and annoyance. The area of the front opening should be ten times the area of the chimney. The throat must be the same area as the flue. And the captain directed and we both built, stone above stone, until one evening we found that our chimney was above the peak of the house and ready to finish off with a final leveling row of stone. Then came the trial fire, the test of our workmanship. The kindling caught, the flame darted up and forward, then curved back to the throat. The smoke arose up the chimney, poured out at its top. The draught was perfect, the fireplace done.

It had been a week's work of long hours, but I had learned to enjoy work and could stand long hours without undue fatigue. For me these days were the happiest I had known, for the island was becoming my home in truth, and all my interests were bound up in it. The hut, the poultry yard, the lake and orchard, they seemed now the greatest part of life to me, and I would not have exchanged our possessions for all that the city of my birth could offer.

Since the night when Stimson, too, had heard the sound of feet on the far shore of the lake, he had never spoken of it and I knew that he did not wish me to broach the subject. Several times I had seen him tilt his ear toward the ground, listening intently, but we had never heard it again, and it was almost forgotten by me. And there had been nothing else

to give us a fear or hope of human habitation of the island.

One morning when the rain had made a pause in its almost continuous dripping or pouring, Stimson suggested that we climb the mountain behind Roaring River and take a look through the glasses at the sea and glimpse the flag again on Signal Hill. I was surprised to find how little interest I had in the chance coming of a ship or our distress signal, but the opportunity of seeing more of the country which was all ours made me eagerly second the proposal, and we were shortly on our way with a lunch strapped to Stimson's back and the guns on our shoulders.

I was following behind the captain when I noticed for the first time what a ragged condition his clothes were in. "Captain," I cried, "you're quite as bad as you were that first day I met you in Guayaquil."

"Bad?" He stopped short, looking around at me in inquiry.

"In your costume," I explained, laughing. "You are back in the Rag-bag Battalion."

He glanced down at such part of his apparel as he could see, then looked me over quizzically. "Well, Bob," he said, "you're hardly in a position, sartorially speaking, to criticize. You need a visit to the tailor yourself. If I ran across you on a city street I'd shout for the police."

"I know; and my shoes are so thin in the soles that

I might as well be barefoot. It must be about time we took to the dogskins."

"We'll take to the needle just as soon as we get back," Stimson promised. "Clothing and shoes are the next requirement of our advanced civilization, and you and I become tailors, Bob. It just happens that there is cloth in plenty growing back of the hut."

"Cloth?" I gasped. "Growing?"

"Mulberry trees—the paper mulberry, which is tapa cloth, properly prepared. For shoes, moccasins of deerhide or dogskin—take your choice. We'll get at it to-morrow," and Stimson resumed his climb of the mountain.

When we broke through the edge of the forest at the timber-line the sun was shining brightly. These rainy-season days, when they were bright, were almost perfect, for the heat of the sun was tempered by the moisture in the air and it was neither cool nor hot. Happily we climbed the last half mile to the summit, where Stimson began a long survey of the horizon with his glasses and I studied the near-by landscape below.

To the southwest was a bank of fog or rain-cloud which shut off my view. I watched it as the wind shifted it back and forth, then looked more intently. "Captain," I said, "will you turn your glasses yonder and tell me what those specks are?"

"Just a minute, Bob." Stimson had the binoculars focused on the sea line in the east. Now he lowered

them and turned to me. "Where away, lad?" he asked.

"In the fog-belt now," I laughed. "A minute ago I saw specks that seemed to move." I pointed to the gray cloud.

He handed me the glasses. "See if you can penetrate it," he said. "My eyes are tired."

The powerful lenses only served to bring the gray cloud nearer and I was just about to give it up as an illusion of the fog, when a whiff of breeze lifted it for a moment and again I saw moving spots spattered irregularly over the slope. What they were I could not tell, for even with the glasses the distance was too great to give them shape and form, but they were animals of some kind, alive and moving.

I thrust the binoculars into Stimson's hand. "Look!" I cried. "It is something—something that moves quickly—animals that run!"

"If I were in Wyoming," Stimson said, after a long survey, "I should know just what to call those specks."

"What would they be in Wyoming?" I asked eagerly.

"Horses. They move like horses, group like horses, graze like horses. Bob, you don't think we are going to find a horse ranch here, too?"

"I don't know why not," I replied, eagerly. "We have chickens and dogs; horses wouldn't be any more strange."

"Strange or not, that is what they are," said Stimson, lowering the glass. "Jiminetty! Look there!" and he pointed to a much closer hillside out in the sunlight where a small band of ponies trotted into view. There were six of them, scraggly little beasts with long manes and tails, and they were following a black stallion who led them down the slope toward the river. They passed a half mile below us, and we watched them till they entered the wood to the north.

"Bob," said Stimson slowly, "this island is a great barn-yard of wild domestic animals. Some time or other it was inhabited by people who knew what to plant and what to raise in the way of live stock, and that is the meaning of the horses and dogs, coffee and cocoa trees, the poultry, sugar cane and tobacco. You haven't a kitten concealed about you, Bob?"

"No," I laughed. "I haven't seen any wild kittens."

"We'll find them. All the comforts of home, Bobbin, so let's get back and construct a horse trap."

"How does one trap horses?"

"Usually with a lariat or lasso on another horse, but we haven't the other horse, Bob. We have to get number one, and I have an idea of a corral with a falling gate that will drop when a trigger is sprung, a sort of figure-four trap. Ever catch bunnies in a figure-four?"

I had tried it one time in the country and I knew

how the trap should work, but the size necessary for a horse trap was appalling, although it did not seem to bother Stimson at all. He led the way down the mountain, crossing Roaring River some distance above its confluence with Comfort Creek, and we made a search for the place where the horses had watered. Soon we found a winding trail down the bluff bank, worn deep by the hoofs of many horses, and following back came to a little flat which the captain said would serve.

After our noonday meal we went to Bamboo Swamp and gathered a hundred or more long canes, about the size of my wrist at their butts. Piling them in the water at the lake's end we bound them together into a raft, which we easily poled down the lake and creek and banked close to the selected flat. It was the lightest work in transportation I had done, for I rode on the load.

Stimson selected two trees that grew close together as his gateway and these he trimmed on their facing sides so that they paralleled for fifteen feet from the ground. It gave him posts for his falling gate, posts that were firmly planted and would stand the shock. While I, under his direction, built a bamboo gate, weaving the tall canes across bars of bamboo and tying each junction with rattan withes, soaked in water, he constructed a corral of circular shape about fifty feet in diameter.

That afternoon and all next day we worked on the

horse trap, and I wondered what the shaggy little animals were doing for water, for none came that way, even though we took precautions to be elsewhere at the time when they had watered before. We set such posts as were necessary, digging holes with bamboo spades, and we used trees for posts wherever we could, weaving bamboo shoots into a high, strong fence that could not be easily broken. In the center of the corral a post was set for the trigger, a crosspiece lashed loosely to it holding the bait. From a notch in the crosspiece to a notch in the upright ran a three-foot piece of wood, completing the figure four, and to the center of this strip a rope ran over a branch of one of the gate-post trees, then down to the gate in the grooves. When it was all finished, we baited the trigger with a bundle of grass and a bunch of plantains, pulled the gate up high in its grooves by the rope, fitted the stick into the notches, and tried it out.

Stimson played the part of a hungry horse and found that he needed to be extremely voracious before he could be caught. He pulled the grass completely off the trigger without springing it and had to shake hard at the plantains before it snapped, letting down the gate with a bang. The stick at the end of the rope flew through the air, almost hitting me as I was doubled up with laughter at Stimson's efforts.

He eased off the pull of the trigger, reset it and sprung it again, this time much more easily; and we reset it and left it, after sprinkling plantains and mummy

apples within the corral and from the gate to the trail. It was the best we could do for bait, as we could only guess what would please the palates of these mountain horses. "I know they will eat plantains," said Stimson, as we carried the tools back home, "and they should favor any kind of apples. Anyway, we'll give it a try."

It rained again that night; in fact, it was misting during all our afternoon at the trap; but a big storm set in late in the evening, with a high wind from the southwest, indicating several days of wet weather. It kept me awake for several hours, for our hut was not built with any great degree of rigidity and under the squalls of wind creaked and groaned sadly. When I did get to sleep I slept lightly and was brought wide awake by the sound of footsteps I had heard twice before, coming to my ear through the medium of the ground. I awoke Stimson at once. "They're coming again," I explained in a whisper.

They were coming this time, for the sound became more distinct even as we listened, ears to ground. Stimson took the rifle and started for the door. "Wait here," he commanded, but for once I rebelled.

"I'm bringing the spatter gun," I said, "and I'm going to be right behind you."

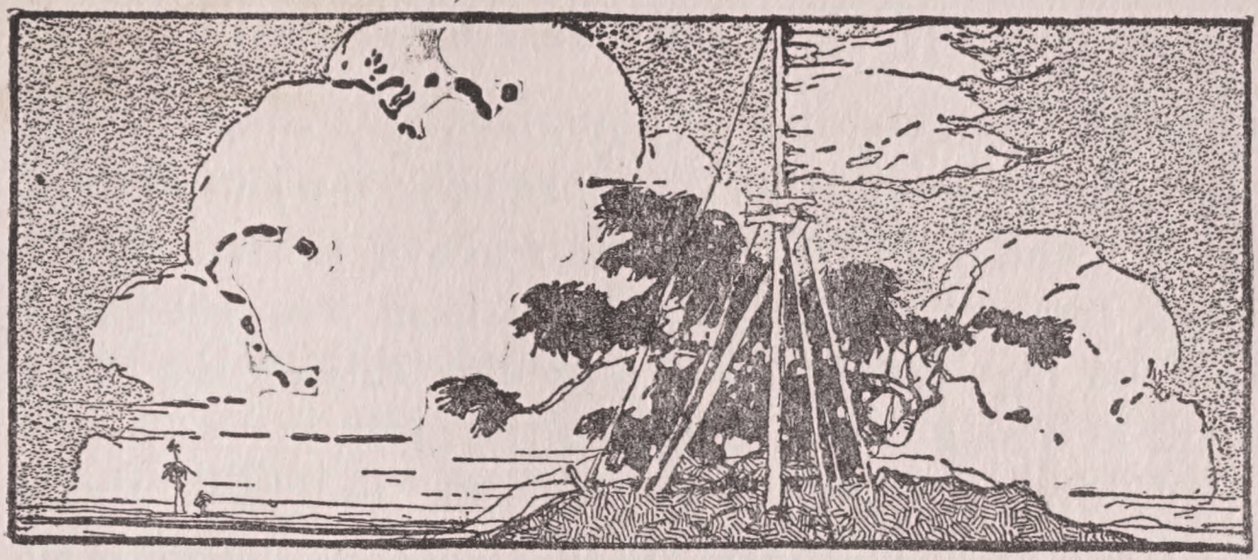
"Very well, Bob." He opened the door, holding it hard against the wind. "Come on. I don't know what we are going to find or what we can see should we find anything in this blackness, but what that noise

is I want to know. Follow me closely, Bob," and he pushed out into the storm.

I could just see him, and I was so close behind him that sometimes my toes touched his heels. When we reached the lake's beach, it seemed a trifle lighter or else we were becoming used to the dark, for he was silhouetted like a black shadow against a lighter background. Slowly we moved down the shore, stopping every few steps to listen. Even above the roar of the storm we could hear the plod, plod, plod of the marching feet, and now we could locate them, coming from the forest at the east end of the grove, moving toward the lake. Our ears told us they were coming; we could see nothing.

Stimson stopped in a patch of brush at the lake's edge and I drew close beside him. With my hand over the locks of the gun to keep the rain which soaked me from the caps, I pushed the muzzle out through the screen, as he had done with the rifle. Then I saw the advantage he had gained by taking our position. Between us and the forest, from which came the sound of footfalls, was a stretch of yellow beach, enough lighter than the black foliage in the night that any one passing across it must be visible to us while we were unseen.

The captain placed his lips close to my ear. "Do not fire until I fire, then shoot to kill," he commanded in a whisper.



CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT TURTLES

STEADILY coming ever nearer, the slow moving sound of marching feet grew louder and more distinct and our eyes ached in endeavor to pierce the blackness of night and storm. Long after our ears told us we should be able to perceive the intruders, so close was the sound, nothing was visible. Then, suddenly, there was a shadow on the line of the beach where it met the wood, and I felt Stimson's muscles stiffen. I was trembling with the tension and excitement. Thirty long seconds, measured by heart-beats, and into our view came the queerest procession I ever expect to see.

Marching in Indian file, close behind each other, came great turtles, one after another, like inverted bath-tubs on moving legs. Slowly they marched, keeping step as though drilled, until there were sixty

or more, pacing gravely away down the shore of the lake. Their heads, like snakeheads, at the end of long necks nodded and peered, high above the enormous shells, some of which must have been five feet long; and the legs, crooked but muscular, carried the great shells at a height of a foot from the ground.

"Jiminetty!" muttered Stimson, following them with his eyes, and I could not but do likewise, so weird and grotesque was this procession of impossible animals. It seemed like a bad dream, and I shook myself to find if I was really awake. When they had vanished into the darkness, we still waited, hearing their feet on the sands, until the sound diminished and was lost in the storm.

"The galapagos," said Stimson, stepping out from our ambush, and his eyes still followed the way they had gone. "Bob, I never expected to see such a thing in this world. Come on home," and he grasped my hand and led me, running through the storm, to the hut.

Before the fireplace, heaped up with lightwood to make hot flame, we dried our rags and I shivered at the memory of that sight. "I hate them!" I exclaimed. "Their heads are snaky, wagging, craning, as though they saw all things! They look like the pictures of animals that lived in prehistoric times, before there were men."

"They are—just that," declared the captain. "They are the last of the Pleocenes, and their kind has disappeared from all the earth except here. In no other

place could you have seen what we saw to-night, and these islands are named from them, Bob."

"I should prefer panthers or jaguars," I said, shuddering.

"No," laughed Stimson. "We needn't be afraid of one of these reptiles leaping on us from a tree branch or swooping down from a high rock to sink its claws into us. Besides, they are remarkably fine eating, caught young."

"Young? Are they ever young?"

"I suppose a galapago under a hundred years of age might be termed youthful, although there is considerable question about the length of life of tortoises. Many a practical joker has whittled a date a century before he was born on a turtle's shell and grinned at the simple trick to fool the scientists. We'll experiment with them as food some day, Bob."

I could not imagine myself ever eating one of the snaky beasts, and went to sleep to have nightmares of enormous turtles, like elephants, crushing me beneath their feet.

When I awoke in the morning the storm was still violent and after breakfast was eaten and cleared away, Stimson suggested we see what was in the package of books we had brought from the dug-out. The very thought of getting into the bundle set my heart beating and eagerly I pulled it from under my bunk.

"What book would you best like to find, Captain?" I asked as I placed the package on the table between us.

"That is a hard question. You mean if there were only one book in there, which I should prefer?"

"Yes."

"I'd take the Bible. For steady reading it has more in it than any book I know. Gives you a better philosophy and nobler thoughts and it teaches you a lot you won't get anywhere else. Then, too, I like its stories and its history. It's a grand old book, the Bible!"

I had never heard Stimson express himself on any religious matter and had the impression that he was not a religious man. True, he had always observed the days marked with a cross on my page of the log-book that served as our calendar, but so mildly that it had hardly been noticeable. We did not continue our labors on Sunday, if we were house-building or constructing fireplaces, but we did the necessary work of the day; we never hunted or fished on Sunday, but he would carry the rifle if we wandered in the woods. I knew that he never prayed aloud just as I knew he never used profanity or any oath more dangerous than "Jiminetty," but I was to find out that day, and on other days which followed, that he was a serious and deep thinking student of the Gospels and one whose God was real to him. There was a Bible in the bundle and we talked as we read from it and he showed me that its truths were vital and every-day matters to be used by us in our daily lives.

There were five books in the package—four and the

Bible; Shakespeare's Complete Works, Robert Burns' Poems, "Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon," and "Midshipman Easy," and all that day we had an orgy of reading. Neither Stimson nor I wanted food; barely we put aside our books long enough to attend the poultry, feeding and watering them, and we forewent the daily trip to the chicken snares and quite forgot to wonder if the horse trap was sprung. We were famished for reading and like gluttons seized the opportunity to make up for our abstemiousness. Late that night we kept feeding the chimney with lightwood to give us opportunity to finish our books.

"This won't do," laughed Stimson, finally, closing his book, which was "Charles O'Malley." I had "Midshipman Easy." "We mustn't gulp these books down like this, or we'll be starving again in a day or two. Suppose we be reasonable, Bob."

"Let me finish this chapter, please."

"Of course," said the captain and remained quiet until I had grudgingly placed a marker between the pages and closed the book. "We have read almost continuously for sixteen hours, Bob."

"I know, but it's making up for a long famine." I yawned and rubbed tired eyes.

"Men who make up a famine in one feed usually are ill from the effects," continued Stimson. "I'll make an agreement with you, Bob, limiting our reading to an hour a day bright days and four on wet days. Is it a go?"

I glanced at "Midshipman Easy"; four hours would just about finish him. "It's a go," I answered.

"Then let's eat a bite and get to our bunks. Tomorrow we must begin cloth making."

"And we must look at our trap. I wonder if we've caught a horse." Again I was back to the interests of our island life.

In the morning the persistent patter of the rain on the nipa leaves gave promise of plenty of opportunity for reading, but we made a trip to the horse trap to find it unsprung and the bait untouched, although there were signs that the horses had passed by on the trail. In the snare were two guans and a hen, which we added to our poultry house after clipping their wings. Stimson was dubious about domesticating the pheasants, fearing they would not take kindly to a cage, but decided to make the attempt, as they were beautiful birds, and would be a great addition to our feathered pets.

We had one hen setting with thirteen eggs beneath her, and she was almost due to bring a family into existence, the first in captivity. Our lady duck, too, was indicating a desire to stay by her nest and we gave her three of her own eggs and four hen's eggs, not having enough of the former to absorb her time. All our birds were growing tamer each day and seemed to thrive on domestication.

Stimson took me with him to find the paper-mulberry tree, a small shrub-like tree with large, hairy leaves, and

we stripped bark off several of the trunks, only on one side to prevent killing them, salving the wounds with mud. Only the inner bark was to be used in the manufacture of cloth, and we carried our harvest to the lake side, sinking it under water with heavy stones. "It isn't to be made in a day," explained the captain. "The bark has to soak to a pulp before it begins to be tapa. In the meantime, we will become cobblers."

That was drier and pleasanter work, for we could be in the hut sheltered from the storm. Stimson marked out the contour of my foot on one of the dogskins we had cured, then quickly cut with his sharp knife a shape that resembled a shoe as little as anything else. I could only laugh at its grotesque proportions, though I knew from experience that the captain was not wasting dog-hide for nothing.

"Now put your foot where it was before," said Stimson, and he began bending the soft leather up and around my instep, and strangely enough, it took the shape of a high slipper, reaching well above the ankle. At the front, where the tongue of a laced shoe would be, two folds and a thong of the same leather bound the shoe in tight so that it fitted me well and was soft and comfortable.

"Not so good as a Cheyenne Indian would make up in Wyoming," Stimson remarked, surveying it, "but better than your worn-out boots. I'll double-sole it and water-proof it with hot grease, and you'll have dry socks hereafter."

"It's a moccasin?" I asked and Stimson nodded.

"The winter moccasin of the Cheyennes," he said, "with the fur on the inside to keep your feet warm. The Siwashes call them muck-lucks."

He made a pair for each of us, and I marveled at their simplicity, for there was but one piece in each shoe; then he built caps for us from the rest of the hide, caps with visors and eaves behind to shed the rain from face and shoulders. Then he patched the worst rents in our clothes, for it must be a week or more before he could make tapa out of the mulberry bark. We were so busy that day that I had almost forgotten "Midshipman Easy" and, although it was a rainy, four-hour day, I read but a chapter.

Next morning I went alone to the trap to find it unsprung, though some of the plantains had been eaten before its gate. The fourth morning it was raining hard and neither of us went. "We'll have to make it to-morrow, rain or shine," Stimson declared that night as we climbed into our beds.

It cleared during the night, and we awoke to a bright sun that was rapidly sucking up the surplusage of moisture, and after breakfast we gathered new bait and started for the trap. In my eagerness I ran on ahead to where I could see the gate between the two trees. It was down.

At my call of "Trap sprung!" the captain came up at a run and we looked eagerly through the openings in the corral wall. Sure enough, there was the brown

side of some large animal within. "We've got one!" I said, excitedly.

"But that isn't a horse," declared the captain, finding a better position to view the interior. "Jiminetty, Bob! We've caught a cow!"

We had—a cow and a calf! a big, brown cow and a clumsy, awkward legged red calf. The cow was endeavoring to find an opening through which she might pry a way out with her strong horns, but the calf was composedly nibbling a plantain and watched us without fear.

"Run, Bob," cried the captain, "go back to the hut for a rope, and run for it! I'll have to lash the beastie or she'll break down our fence. What luck!" and I sped away for a lariat while Stimson watched and protected the corral from annihilation.

The captain made a running noose in the end of the halliard I brought him, then climbed to the top of the gate, coiling the rope on his arm. From this position of vantage overlooking the corral, he awaited his opportunity, and when the cow had withdrawn from the fence, frightened away by my shouts, he tossed the noose so adroitly that it caught over horns and one leg. In another moment the cow had thrown herself, and Stimson, jumping to the ground, hog-tied her with the rest of the rope.

Hobbled fore and aft, the cow was led back, protesting but helpless, to the hut, and the calf followed meekly. We set to work to build a shed to house

them and finished a rough bamboo affair with a nipa leaf roof that afternoon. The next day Stimson milked our cow, a delicate operation led up to by a gradual acquaintance and friendship with the animal.

"In Wyoming," said Stimson, as he was attempting to win a kindly look from the cow with an offered plantain, "I've lashed and milked a cow cut out of the herd in a half hour, but that is too rough work for our lady here. So, bossy! so! We're going to treat you gently, bossy, very gently, because we want you to like us and give us lots of milk. Why, Bob, think of it! Real milk!"

I did think of it—milk in my coffee, milk in the batter-cakes, milk in my big, tin cup; but I did not have milk that day. Stimson milked the cow, but the cow managed a hobbled kick with its two rear legs which lifted pail and milker through the open front of the shed. Stimson was not damaged at all, but the pail landed bottom up and my dreams vanished in a minute.

But there was milk for us next day and the calf began to seek sustenance from grass and plantains while we luxuriated in cream and bananas, berries with cream, poi and cream, and the hundreds of good things that milk improved or made possible. Stimson, never satisfied until he had achieved all the betterments, built a churn from a section of bamboo, and I worked the dasher until butter came. We already had salt, evaporated from sea water, so Stimson worked up a

roll of salt butter that any farmer's housewife might be proud to acknowledge.

Although we had rebaited the horse trap and made calls on it at intervals that became gradually less frequent, there was no second thrill of excitement at finding it sprung, and we learned that the horses had abandoned the trail beside it. Stimson said they were too wary to be caught that way, and began planning other means for capturing one or more. Never after seeing the horses on the hill was he satisfied to walk; he had been cowboy and soldier too long to travel on his own legs when there were equine legs to be had.

A pitfall was our next endeavor, and it was dug in the trail which the ponies had substituted for the old one by the corral, a hole about ten feet square, not so deep as it should have been, owing to the fact that we ran into bed-rock six feet below the top soil and could not go deeper without blasting, and gunpowder was too precious for that. So we built up the sides with bamboo, so they would not offer any purchase for a leap, and we covered it over with bamboos, leaves and dirt, carefully concealing it with a top dressing that imitated the surrounding ground.

We were not to approach this trap at all after it was finished, for Stimson believed the horses smelled us out, and we inspected it through the glasses from the side hill. But the horses promptly changed their route to water and never came near the hidden hole.

It was just after we had completed the deadfall that

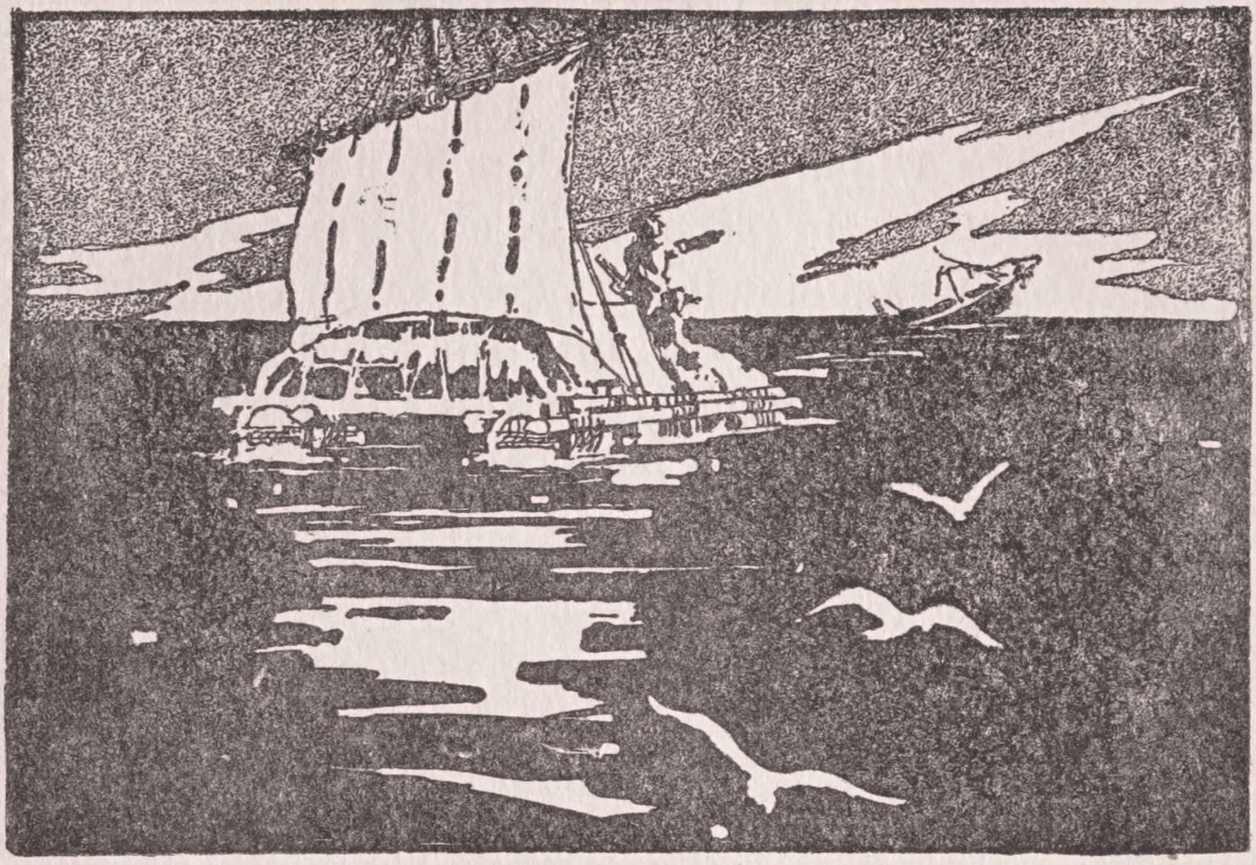
Stimson began tapa making. The mulberry bark, soaked until it was pulp, was hammered with wooden mauls upon a large stone into sheets of fairly thin, fairly even, paper-like cloth. When it was thoroughly dried, it made a coarse, yellow-brown fabric somewhat like burlaps, but resisted water much better than our ragged, woolen clothes.

So a month went by, marked off day by day in the log-book by a line or cross, and with it passed the rainy season and came the calm, tropic days, the hundreds of varieties of birds, bands of chattering monkeys and shrieking parrots. I greeted the return of summer with joy, for I had read through all the books and newspapers to the smallest advertisement in the oldest newspaper in the bundle. Many of Burns' poems I knew by heart.

All of our talk now was of the circumnavigation of the island. We had planned it for weeks and had accumulated the supplies necessary for the cruise. Stimson anticipated a week at least on sea, with land expeditions that would double the time. We could safely leave our live stock now, as the fowls were allowed liberty during the day and sought the coop at dusk of their own free will, and could provide for themselves and their broods of chicks and ducklings. The calf, thoroughly weaned, and its mother, now dry, made pasture in the grove and we had no fear of their wandering back into wildness.

We rebuilt the "Cozy Cask" completely, and it was

a better sailing craft than it had ever been before. The hatches which were its deck had great bamboos to support them in place of the oil barrels, and I suggested that we rename it the "Rollicking Catamaran." It could sail much closer into the wind than before and Stimson had supplied a rigging of leg-of-mutton sails, easily handled and better adapted to our needs.



CHAPTER XV

MY HEEL FINDS AN OYSTER

IT was daybreak one morning when we shoved the "Cozy Cask" out through the light surf, hoisted the sails and caught a northeast breeze that wafted us gently on our way for a westward run past Signal Point. From its staff our flag still floated, tattered and frayed by the winds, looking more than ever a signal of distress. Stimson, at the steering oar, bowed to it gravely. "Thank you," he said. "You've worked all winter, and it is not your fault that you have accomplished nothing. Keep at it, flag."

"I don't care whether it keeps at it or not," I said, happily, lying in the shade of the sail. "This suits me pretty well, Captain."

"Contented?" he asked.

"Perfectly. Aren't you?"

Stimson only smiled in reply, but I went on to enumerate my reasons for contentment. "Haven't we about everything we could ask for?" I cried. "House, barn and farm, the best of food and sufficient clothes, a whole island all our own to explore and discover new things for our uses. I think I have a right to be contented, Captain."

Again he made no reply, and I wondered for the first time if he shared with me all the happiness of this strange adventure. He always seemed so contented that I had never had another idea of it, believing him as ready as was I to be a permanent castaway. I would have asked him the question pointblank, but he called me to take the helm while he swung the sails to make the turn down the coast for our run southward along the island's western shore.

A current setting in shoreward kept us busy navigating the raft, but it added a couple of knots speed to our progress past the upper coast, a barren and uninteresting stretch of high bluffs, and we were glad to have the advantage. It was well on in the afternoon before there came a change in the coast line, a break in the cliffs that evidenced a bay or inlet, and Stimson put the raft's nose in through the narrow opening.

It was a tiny bay behind the headlands, calm as our own little lake, with a beach that rose gently to the edge of a forest. Here the trees were larger and more hardy, many cypresses and pines, and from one of these, standing alone on the point of rock which marked its southern end, we named the bay. The scraggly tree gave the idea by its shape; Ostrich Bay we called it, even before we had left the raft.

We dropped anchor in shallow water beyond the surf line and we waded ashore. I had taken but a few steps landward when I gave a cry of pain. "What is it, Bob?" cried Stimson, plowing through the water to my side.

"Cut myself," I answered, laughing at my own yell of pain.

"Cut yourself? Where?"

I tried to hold my foot above water, but it was too deep. "Stepped on something," I explained. "It cut like a knife."

"Let me see," and Stimson lifted me in strong arms. "Which foot?"

I kicked it out. Across the heel was a long, deep gash which bled profusely.

"Jiminetty!" ejacuated Stimson, starting shoreward with me in his arms. "Now what do you think could do that?"

After binding up the wound he waded back to discover, hunting with his hand in the three feet of water, his head stretched back to keep his nose above the

surface. In a few minutes of groping about the bottom, he straightened up, holding high the half of a shell.

"There is the aggressor, Bob," he said, throwing it ashore. "That was once an oyster."

I picked it up, looking with admiring eyes at the iridescent interior while Stimson searched for live oysters. In a short time he found a bunch of them and broke them away from the bottom rock. "These," he said, as he joined me ashore, "will pay the penalty for their dead relative's assault on you, and the penalty shall be fried oysters. Does that sound good to you, Bob?"

"Do oyster shells all have this beautiful interior?" I asked, hobbling behind him up the shingle. Stimson turned quickly, taking the shell I held out.

"All? Not much they don't! That's mother of pearl, Bob. These must be pearl oysters," and he began forcing open the shells with his heavy knife, eagerly searching the bivalves within.

I sat down and laughed at his earnestness. "You're throwing away the only valuable part of those pearl oysters," I said. "We could eat the meat of them."

"Right you are, Bobbin, but let me have my excitement. Pearls, lad—think of it! A fortune, perhaps, right out in that little bay! I am going out there and bring back a sack of them."

"And I'll build a fire to fry them on," I returned, "and get ready a pot of coffee to wash them down. Never mind pearls, Captain, so long as you bring back

oysters." But Stimson was wading out to the oyster beds.

I watched him as I gathered wood for the fire. He was working out into deeper water, diving down every few seconds to bring back the shells which he placed in a canvas strapped about his neck. I had the fire burning with the coffee over it and he was still fishing.

I walked down to the edge of the sea, and sat there smiling to myself at his efforts. The sun was getting low and sent a shaft of bright color across the bay, making a silhouette of Stimson's head and shoulders. Then I saw a second silhouette and simultaneously I yelled. It was the fin of a shark between him and me, and his back was toward it.

Just in time, Stimson turned, saw and dodged. There was the surge of white spume as the great fish whirled at him, passed him, and Stimson ran for shore. I saw three black fins against the sun behind him, but the water was shallow and they did not follow in.

"Thank you," said the captain, shaking the water from him and dropping the bag of bivalves. "You yelled just in time, Bob. I'll carry my knife next trip."

"You're not going back?" I asked anxiously. It had been a greater shock to me than to him, this narrow escape of his.

"We'll see when we've opened these oysters. If there are pearls, I'll not let a fish or so scare me away from them. It's a chance at a fortune, Bob."

I HAD THE FIRE BURNING

He had brought in twoscore or more, and in only one was there a pearl. That was so small that Stimson called it a seed pearl, but it encouraged him to decide to spend a day longer there and seek further. "It hardly seems worth risking sharks' bites for," he said, as I put the oysters in the frying-pan, salted them and heard them begin to sizzle; "but where one is, there may be more and quite likely bigger. If you're willing, we'll spend a day here seeing what we have found."

I was quite willing. That little white globule, no bigger than a bird-shot, had stirred up my adventurous blood and I was willing to risk sharks and drowning to get more. We ate supper, discussing the chances of success, and we stretched out in our blankets afterward, still talking of pearls and their values. The moon came up full behind the forest and cast a light on the surface of the bay, making it luminous.

"The oyster beds run out," Stimson explained. "We struck at the shore end of them, and the bigger oysters will be in the deeper water. We'll have to dive for them, Bob."

"I don't like the idea of diving into a possible shark," I said.

"No, we are not going to take any such chance. I'll dive and you will keep a watch out for big fish. We'll work from the raft, and we ought to have half a ton of shell by to-morrow night."

"And do we have to open a thousand pounds of

oysters?" I asked, for it had not been an easy job to pry out a half hundred.

"We'll open just enough to see if there's a hope, then pile the rest on shore here to rot open. We can come back here in a month and we'll find them ready for us. That's the method, I believe, although I do not know as much about pearl fishing as I wish I did. It never struck me that I'd ever own a pearl oyster bed."

I was silent for some time. "Isn't it strange, Captain," I said at last, "that it comes to you when it is no use at all? Pearls are valueless here."

"Not worth one stalk of bamboo," admitted Stimson, "but they have some use for them up in the States, I expect, and I still have a hope of revisiting those parts."

"Do you want to leave here?" I asked the question that was close to my heart.

Stimson took time to answer. "I am not discontented here, Bob, don't think that, but I should not like to think I am going to be here all the rest of my life. I have a hankering, more or less, for civilization, and then, too, I feel a responsibility for your education and development. How old are you, Bob?"

"Sixteen my last birthday."

"You should be getting the education preparatory to college. It is a bad thing to miss, education. I never had a chance for more than the rudiments, and it has always handicapped me."

"Not if we spend the rest of our lives here."

The captain laughed. "More here than in the biggest city in the world, Bob. Right here on this island, possibly, are all the necessities and luxuries of life, and we without education enough to make use of them or even know them when we see them. Suppose I had a working knowledge of botany instead of a casual acquaintance with plant life, picked up here and there. I could classify a hundred plants and herbs that we are passing over unnoticed, finding some more valuable than any we know. Suppose I had a scientific knowledge of chemistry, would I be worrying about the powder getting low? I'd be making gunpowder and hunting minerals in those mountains to mould into bullets and shot."

"I was thinking more of a classical education," I admitted.

"Even that may be sadly missed in the wild places. If I had been grounded in the Latin tongue, how much more easily I might have acquired my Spanish and French and I would speak them as the educated talk, not the language of the soldier and peon. It all has its value, Bob, in every place in the world and in every walk of life, and I hate to see you miss your chance by this adventure."

"But I am learning more from you, here in the wilderness, than I should at school, Captain," I insisted.

"You soon will know my all," he said, and there was the note of sadness in his voice.

"Captain, I am contented and happy here. If there was a ship putting in ready to drop anchor out there right now ——"

"The light! Bob, the light!" shouted Stimson, jumping to his feet. My eyes found it as had his, at its coming. There on the sky-line, between the headlands of the bay, where the deep blue of the sky lightened imperceptibly to meet the blue of the sea, it sprang instantaneously into being, a second full moon rising in the west. It was unmistakably our light of the open sea, of the night I walked in my sleep, clear white with a tinge of blue, without flicker or variation. Where there had been nothing but blackness a moment before, now was a great blue-white light, a ball of incandescence at the edge of the sea.

With it came awe. I felt the same dread and terror of the unknown that crept over me at that first sight of its mystery and I moved close to the erect form of Stimson, leaning forward toward it, striving to focus the glass upon it. It was weird, impossible! It was a spectral thing that seemed of another world. Silently Stimson handed me the binoculars and I found the light on its field.

There was nothing but the light, only a trifle intensified by the lenses. There was no explanation in the glasses. "Captain," I said, passing them back to him, "what do you think?"

He laughed jerkily. "As before, I cannot guess," he said. "Certainly not a ship's search-light all this

time in that one place. That is absurd! It is more than three months since we first saw it."

"Yes; more than three months."

"If there was any island off there with this light upon it we could see the land with the glasses at daytime."

"There is no island there," I declared.

"If it was a submarine volcano in action there would be commotion of the sea. Then, too, we should see smoke by day as well as fire at night. Is it where it was before, Bob?"

I thought so, but it was difficult to judge with any certainty, for we had never looked at it twice from the same place. In the same general direction, certainly.

"I hate this inability to solve a mystery," Stimson declared with an energy that surprised me and showed me how much he, too, was affected by the weirdness of the light. "Yet I dare not sail for it. I can do nothing—nothing but make futile guesses. Bob, would you like now the education that would dissolve that light into its components and tell you whether it was electric arc or star or planet?"

"That could be done?" I asked.

"Any physicist could solve the point in short order."

"You say you dare not sail for it. Why not?"

"It is beyond view of this island, probably. We might not be able to return here; might pass this by, for big as the island seems it is but a tiny spot on the broad ocean. Then how to find the light which is

much smaller and, unfortunately, does not shine every night."

I had built up the fire for the comfort of its blaze and we now lay down beside it and watched the distant flame until the moon crossed into the west to vie with it. Then my eyes grew tired and I dozed off to awaken only at the captain's call in the morning sunlight.

"Nothing there, Bob," he said, as my eyes turned toward the horizon. "The light went out about two —disappeared just as suddenly as it came. Now let's forget it, and become pearl fishers."

We brought the raft closer in and at Stimson's direction carried a dozen or more large rocks aboard, sculling the craft back over the oyster beds. He went out much farther than he had been the previous evening, into water about fifteen feet deep. A square of canvas was attached by its corners to a line and placing a stone in its center, Stimson sunk it to the bottom, the end of the line tied to the mast. It was to be the receptacle to hold the catch. His knife was thrown by a line over his shoulder and was the only piece of clothing he wore. Then, with a stone in either hand to carry him down, he jumped over the side.

It was my duty to watch for sharks, and I had the rifle ready and studied the water to seaward for the first sight of a fin breaking the surface. In less than a minute Stimson's wet head poked up near the raft, gasping for breath. "Hand me another rock," he said. "Business is good," and down he went again.

I watched him squirming about on the bottom, working with toes and hands, then gave my mind to my duty. There was not a ripple to indicate sharks. Stimson came up again and again, going back each time after a minute or two above. Finally he climbed aboard. "Haul away, Bob," he commanded. "Full up below."

The canvas came over the side heavy laden and we emptied its contents on deck, a wet mass of jagged shells that must have weighed fifty pounds. Putting aside the rifle, I helped Stimson open shells, for neither of us could wait, but must find out at once what we had captured in the way of fortune. The first oysters opened showed mother of pearl, the indication that our bivalves were not the ordinary, culinary kind.

Stimson made the first find, a pearl blister. It was a raising of the interior lining of the shell and looked, as its name indicated, an opalescent blister of mother of pearl; but it would have to be cut from the shell before it could be mounted. "It has a value, but nothing like what a detached pearl would bring," the captain explained. "In fact, all these shells have value. Pearl handles for knives, buttons and other things are manufactured from mother of pearl. We'll keep our shell, but we'll hunt for pearls."

I found one, bigger than the seed pearl of last night, but not large enough to arouse us to wild enthusiasm. "About ten dollars' worth," was Stimson's valuation. "Find them bigger and we get rich faster." But that

was all the riches we gathered from the catch, and I had a blister on my hand larger than the pearl blister before the last shell was opened.

Stimson was not at all discouraged. "One pearl in a thousand shell is the average, I've heard," he said. "I'll go back after more," and he resumed diving operations.

All day long we gathered oysters and opened oysters, the net result at the close of the afternoon being three small pearls and a pile of unopened oysters that half filled the raft. Stimson said we could work on them while we sailed southward down the coast. The idea of leaving them to open by themselves after rotting was too slow and unexciting. We wanted to know what was inside.

Stimson would not let me dive, although I begged for the chance of gathering shell fifteen feet below the surface. It was not sharks that he feared, for we saw none all day, but the pressure of water on my ear-drums. He was used to diving, yet he was almost deaf that evening from the strain of the water in his ears.

We rowed out through the heads next morning, picking up a wind from the northeast, and resumed our journey. Gradually the high bluffs drew away to the north and we could look across plains that ran back to the foot-hills of the mountains, plains barren of trees and green with tall grass of the rainy season.

CHAPTER XVI

MY FIRE GOES OUT

"WE might just as well use these for bait as be dumping them over the side," said Stimson, referring to oysters. "There are usually fish in the sea."

"We haven't hooks for sea fish," I stated. "Our small ones wouldn't hold anything bigger than a perch."

"That's easy." Stimson picked up one of the oyster shells. With the handle of his heavy knife he broke it, then threw it away. A second one he cracked more carefully, handing me a curving rim of shell that formed the crude shape of a hook. "Polish that down, sharpen the point and barb it and you'll have a South Sea fish-hook," he said. "There are always fish-hooks everywhere," he added. "Somehow they are provided so that no man need want for food where

there are fish. I believe it is a providence for castaway sailor men."

He went back to the task of opening shells for pearls while I rigged a line to troll behind the raft. We were bowling along at a great rate with a fresh breeze behind us and a strong current setting in along the coast, now free of dangerous rocks. The "Cozy Cask" was rapidly nearing the southern end of the island, marked by a single, tall mountain peak.

I had my foot done up in a bandage because of the cut, and one hand in a rag from blisters and I had tired of opening oysters for pearls that did not develop. Sitting at the stern of the raft with a line in my hand waiting for a bite was better sport and I lolled lazily there, watching the sea and sky and the hills which ran back from the sea to meet the mountains.

"Jiminetty!" I heard Stimson mutter; then, "Look here, Bob!" and I jumped to his side.

"What is it? A pearl?" I asked eagerly.

"Look!" He placed a small object on the palm of my hand. It was a pearl by its color and luster, but the oddest shaped pearl I had ever seen. It was like a little, squatting man.

"Why, it's a pearl image!" I gasped, studying it.

"It's Buddha, god of the Buddhists," he said.

"But it's pearl? You found it in an oyster?" I asked, not able to understand.

Stimson nodded. "It is real pearl, found in this shell," and he held it for me to see.

"It just happened to look like this—so human?" I asked.

"So unhuman you mean," laughed Stimson. "That isn't the astonishing part of this, Bob. I can tell you how it came to be that shape, but I can't tell you how it came in this oyster, for that means a Chinese fisherman has been in Ostrich Bay within five years."

"How do you mean?"

"The nucleus of this pearl was placed in the shell by a Chinaman. As oysters are not supposed to make extended journeys, and as they haven't more than six or seven years of life, the inference is that this oyster was inoculated here and within that limit of time. And, Bob, it means that the man who did it intends to come back."

"Tell me how it was done," I said eagerly. "How are pearls made? I always thought they just happened."

"Usually they do just happen; that is, some parasite gets into the oyster's interior, and to protect itself against the parasite, the oyster deposits around it a juice which hardens. Successive deposits build up the pearl, the nucleus of which is this tiny worm or microbe. That is the natural pearl, usually round, sometimes oval. The pearl blister is where the parasite has bored into the shell and the oyster has healed it by depositing pearl matter over the entrance."

"This Buddha image couldn't have bored in."

"Of course not. A Chinaman took a live oyster,

carefully pried open the shells and with a split piece of bamboo inserted a tiny bit of carved ivory or a clay image; then he replaced the oyster in its bed to wait three or four years while the oyster built it into pearl. Probably hundreds of oysters in Ostrich Bay are making pearl images of Buddha."

"Are they very valuable?"

"Not so valuable as a round pearl of the same weight, no, but if we had this in San Francisco's Chinatown we'd be able to sell it for enough so we'd not starve for a time. We will go back to Oyster Bay when we've circled the island, Bob."

"Looking for Buddhas?"

"To place a signal for the Chinese pearl fisher when he comes back, so he may know we are waiting here for him to take us off."

"You are certain he was Chinese?" Stimson nodded. "I thought their god was Confucius."

"No. Confucius was a man, a philosopher and teacher, not a god. He gave the Chinese rules of living, not religion. The most of China as well as India is Buddhist."

Stimson continued his work of opening shells and I returned to fishing, but neither of us was rewarded by the luck which is supposed to guard fishermen. Oysters and sea fish refused to give us food or fortune; so we made camp early in the afternoon, selecting a place on the beach where a little cove gave the "Cozy Cask" a sheltered anchorage. We had brought two casks of

water with us, but it was warm, flat and unpleasant to the taste, and Stimson suggested that we make a search for fresh water in the hills behind us. I forgot all about my cut heel in the excitement of a shore excursion and we started off together, Stimson with the rifle and I with the spatter gun.

"There is some sort of stream in the southern half of the island," Stimson declared, "or we'd find more sign of horses along Roaring River. I have an idea it takes its rise up there on the divide and flows southward. If I'm right, we should break into it in a few hours' hike."

I limped a little, although I concealed the fact from Stimson as much as possible as we climbed up the grass-grown plain, deep in green tangle of vines and low brush. There was no shade, nothing higher than the sage or an occasional cactus, rearing bare with spiny arms. It was an extremely hot afternoon and before we had gone an hour I was suffering from thirst and the pain in my foot, but made no complaint for fear the captain would turn back.

Only once did we see game. A pair of pheasants got up from the scrub and I hit one of them, dropping it, wounded, in the grass, then could not find it. We wasted half an hour looking for the bird. A little later we saw a dust cloud far ahead which must have been made by a band of horses or cattle, but even the glasses failed to distinguish which.

The mountains with the afternoon sun upon them

seemed no nearer than at the beach, and we had come a long way over the moor. Neither was there any sign of a watercourse in the distance before us. Stimson suggested that we give over the search and return to the raft, but I had to confess I was too lame for it. I could never make the distance back on my wounded foot. We could go on and I would keep up as long as I was able, trying to find water, but to return over those sun-blistered plains was impossible for me.

Finally Stimson came to a halt at the top of a rise. "We'll camp here," he said, "and I'll go ahead for food and water. No use your wearing yourself out with that game foot."

He left me the rifle, for there was better chance at game with the shotgun, and he took the empty water bag. "I'll be back when I find water," he promised. "Take it easy and don't worry," and he went on to the east.

I took the bandages from my cut, finding that it had opened and was bleeding. It was swelling, too, and had an ugly look about it that made me rebandage it quickly. Then I lay down in the grass and waited for Stimson to return.

Below me to the west lay the sea, stretching out to the horizon's rim and the sun made a path of gold across it to its edge, tinged the plains with an orange hue, and made the mountains behind me pink and lavender with deep blue in the shadows. From the edge of the sea in the west to the mountain tops in the

east there was nothing to indicate life, no motion of land, of sea or sky.

I grew more lonesome as the sun went down. I had not expected the captain before dark, had anticipated a wait perhaps well into the night, but the approaching twilight, creeping slowly to wipe out sea and hills, gave me nervous chills. Limping painfully about, I gathered dry sage-brush and built a fire, hoping it would dispel my weakness of fear.

The fire ate up the lightwood as rapidly as I could gather it, and finally it was too dark to find fuel that would keep up a blaze for more than a minute or two. Dried grass and dead sage made a flare that was gone almost in its making, and had it not been that I feared Stimson would pass me by in the night, I should have given over my attempt.

I kept matches in a cartridge shell, corked, that they might be free from damp. This building and rebuilding of fires had used them until but two remained. I must not run out of matches until Stimson came, for a flare at the right moment would prevent his going by me.

The moon would be up later, about ten, then I should be able to see him at a distance, and he would be able to recognize the landmarks of this place where he had left me. I must keep my signals going at intervals until then. Two matches were entirely inadequate unless I could find some fuel more slow in combustion than weeds.

Hobbling painfully, I groped in widening circles about my camp, feeling with outstretched hands in the grass for stick or stalk, brush or root. A sudden rustling almost beneath my feet gave me a start that sent me hurrying back to the dying fire. Something alive was in the deep grass, and my imagination built the noise into snakes without effort on my part. I was frightened. I tried to blow the embers into flame, but they were too nearly ash. The fire went out.

I sat there in the darkness quivering with fear, my ears catching and magnifying each sound of the night, each breath of wind in the grass, and my excited fancy painting nightmare horrors. There was, perhaps, fever from the cut for my brow burned and my eyes ached.

I used the next to the last match to raise a momentary flame to mitigate my fears, and I tried feverishly to nurse it along with grass and tiny twigs, but the grass was green and the fire went out. Almost with its last spark came that blue-white flame across the sea, the mysterious night light, and, strangely enough, it came to comfort me. It was an acquaintance, something I had known before, and it soothed my fears. I sat watching its steady gleam, and my fever quieted. The rustlings in the grass, the visions of serpents, even the pain of my wound dissipated in the friendliness of this glowing ball of fire.

The sound of a shot came to me through the air. It seemed to come from below me, from seaward, but I knew that must be a fallacy of the echoing hills.

Stimson, had he passed me, could not have been so far away as the sound of that shot. It was so indistinct, so distant that it was barely audible. If it had come from the west, it must have been out on the sea and that was impossible. No, the shot was behind me, to the eastward; Stimson was signaling me. I raised the rifle and fired twice into the air.

Forgetting my fear of snakes and noises, I gathered brush and built a fire with the last of my matches, and I hobbled farther away to bring fuel to keep it ablaze. Then I heard Stimson's call, "Ahoy, Bob! I'm coming!" and I ran to meet him.

I was in Stimson's arms and I was crying for the joy of it. "Why, Bobbin!" he said cheerily, soothingly. "Don't, lad! There's nothing to fear. I'm back and here's water." He held the bag to my lips. I had not realized before how parched and fevered for water I was. I drank and drank until he took it from me, placing his hand to my forehead. "What's the matter, Bob?" he asked. "You are sick?"

"I don't know—sick or frightened. Both, I guess," I answered, laughing. "But I'm all right now, Captain."

He supported me with an arm about me to the fire, burned again to a few coals that glowed amid the ash. "You are all worn out, Bob," he said. "What is it? Has the cut been aching?"

"It is worse, I think, but it isn't that. Captain, I was lonely and scared. I heard snakes and things in

the brush. I am just an ordinary coward with you gone."

"Not that, ever, Bob. No, you're far from being a coward, as this fire and your signal shots prove. You did just the right thing, Bob, for I could never have found you if it had not been for your signals."

"I only answered yours."

"Mine?" Stimson stared at me in amazement.

"Your shot," I explained.

"I did not shoot. Tell me what you mean," cried Stimson, and he turned to look at the light at the water's brim. My legs crumpled under me, and I fell to the ground beside him.

"You—did—not—shoot?" I gasped, touching him with my hand in the fear he might vanish. "You did shoot, Captain. I heard you shoot. Just before I fired, you shot."

Stimson sat down beside me and his arm went around me. "Don't bother so, Bob. You are sick, feverish from your wound. You thought you heard me, but it was a sound of the night, intensified by your fever."

I could hardly believe my ears now. Stimson's denial of the shot seemed more a delirium, less reality than had the shot. That was in my ears yet, the reverberating boom of gunpowder, and it was unmistakable.

"Stimson," I said, quieting my voice to make it convincing, "there was a gunshot a minute before I fired the rifle. You heard the rifle?"

"Yes—twice. You fired twice?"

"I fired twice, following a gunshot. Did you not hear that?"

"No, only the rifle. I was not a half mile up the hill, and was afraid I had passed you. Then came the signal shots and the flame of your fire."

"The shot I heard and answered seemed to come from the sea, but I thought that was delusion for it must be you. It was a gunshot, Captain; there can be no mistake about that."

Stimson sat silent looking seaward at the flame. "I wish I knew what that was," he said finally, pointing at it. "But come, Bob, we'll have food. I killed a chicken in the wood beside the river. We will broil it."

"You believe I heard a gun?" I asked.

"I do. Give me a match to start a fire." Stimson evidently wished to change the subject.

"Mine are gone, Captain," I replied. "I used them all keeping up the signal."

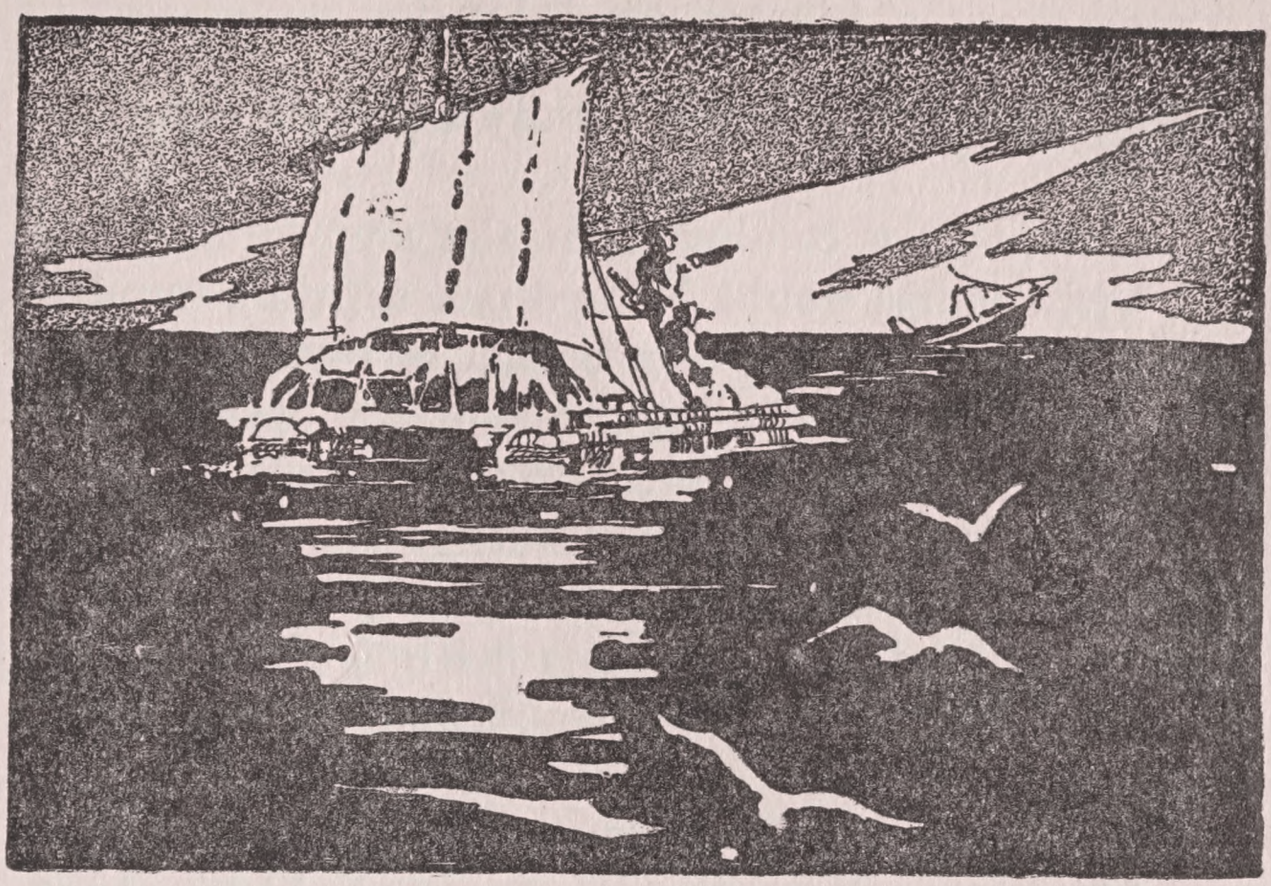
"Then we don't eat to-night," laughed Stimson. "I haven't one, and I am almost hungry enough to eat this chicken raw. Well, we must wait till we get back to the raft in the morning."

After redressing my wound, which he bathed carefully in the remainder of the water, we lay down for sleep and the captain told me of his search for the river. He had discovered it not five miles from where he left me, but the water was brackish with salt from

the sea and he was convinced that there was tide-water backed up in it, so had sought higher up toward its source. For mile after mile he had walked along its marshy bank, testing it by taste, and it still remained undrinkable.

It was sunset before he found the river flowing with a current that gave the water freshness and after drinking his fill he started back with a full water bag. He killed the chicken beside the stream, and he found a trail of wild horses leading to it, as he felt certain he would; but he spent no time in hunting. He was anxious to get back to me, so took his course by the sun and made straight over the hills.

I told him of the rustling in the grass that had frightened me and he placed the blame on hares. "I saw sign of rabbits," he explained, "and I have no doubt there are many of them on the moor. It isn't a likely place for snakes." So he reassured me, and I slept.



CHAPTER XVII

THE LONG SHOT

"HUSH!" warned Stimson, hunching me with his elbow into wakefulness. "Be quiet as a mouse, but look!"

The early sun was making long shadows of the mountains across the plains as I cautiously lifted my head to peer above the grass. Between us and the mountains, not a half mile away, six horses came trotting quietly along, approaching us. At their head was the same black stallion we had seen before. Sleep left my eyes at the sight of their tossing manes and

waving tails, and I could hardly repress a cry of admiration.

The herd were coming from their morning drink, and their course would bring them within a hundred feet of where we were concealed. I reached for the rifle, but Stimson smilingly shook his head. I remembered then that horses were not game.

We both studied the black leader as they approached. He was much larger than his mates, a magnificent animal, and he pranced along with arched neck as though to display to the others his agility and morning gaiety.

Suddenly we saw him pause, fore legs stiffening to stay his motion, haunches bending to hold him back, and there came a frightened neigh from his high thrown head. The herd turned and raced away at a gallop, but the stallion stood his ground, pawing the turf and breathing in loud snorts.

"What ails them?" the captain whispered. "They couldn't have seen us."

"Must have scented us," I answered as cautiously.

"Wind's still in the northeast. No—look, Bob!"

From a little bunch of sage-brush came two dogs, and in their tigerish motions was the evident intention of an attack upon the black stallion, and he seemed to relish the prospect. He watched them circle in approach, keeping his head toward them, stamping the ground with neighs of defiance.

"No, no, I'll not stand for this," said Stimson, seiz-

ing the rifle I still held. "I don't want my horse all ripped to pieces by these pesky dogs! I'll stop this!"

I had to laugh at Stimson's claim to ownership in the black horse he had failed as yet to trap. "He doesn't need his master's help," I whispered. "He can take care of himself."

One of the dogs sprang at his throat, but the black, with bared teeth, lurched forward and we heard the canine yelp of pain as the beast was thrown aside. The second dog, taking advantage of that moment of time, gained a position in rear of the horse and would have ham-strung him had not Stimson's rifle spoke. It was a long shot, nearly five hundred yards, but the dog leaped high in air, dropping dead on the ground.

The captain dared not fire at the other dog, for it was between us and the stallion, and there were too many chances of wounding the horse. He threw another cartridge into the chamber and waited his opportunity. Cautiously the dog circled, but the horse was facing it, watching its every movement. Then the horse charged, lowering his head and plunging with bared teeth at his assailant, and the dog fled in fright. It was a chase now, the dog with tail between its legs running for safety with the triumphant stallion behind, and so they disappeared from our view.

"Whew!" breathed Stimson. "I wouldn't have that black hurt for all the pearls in Ostrich Bay! I'm going to ride him yet."

"You'll have to catch him first, Captain," I laughed,

"and he does not act as though that were easy. What is your scheme?"

Stimson did not reply. Instead he asked me how my foot was feeling and insisted on looking at it. He scowled as he saw how badly it was swollen. "Can you walk on it?" he asked.

I made a fairly successful attempt. "We'll make for the raft," he said, "taking it easy, and I'll help you when it gets too painful. Let's make a start."

We did start, but we made hardly any distance. I was right where I had heard the rustling in the brush the night before when I heard it again. Also I heard a whining that I had not heard the previous time.

"Captain!" I called; he was behind me. "There is something here in the brush."

He came running up, cocking the rifle. I had stopped dead in my tracks and was peering into the mass of sage and weeds; then I dropped to my knees with a joyous cry. "Puppies! Why, it's puppies!" I shouted.

"Careful, there! Careful, Bob," warned Stimson, but I had already grasped one of the little, soft fluffs of fur in my arms and was hobbling after another. They were too small to be fearful of, three wee puppies barely old enough to be taken from their mother. Stimson helped me capture them, and I was in great glee at my find.

"Going to foster-mother them?" asked the captain, as I cuddled the three in my arms.

"May I?" I asked eagerly. "May I bring them up and tame them?"

"There is a mother dog somewhere out there on the plain. Going to leave her without any family?"

I thought for a minute. I wanted them very much, but Stimson had given me another aspect of the matter to consider. Was it fair to rob the mother of her puppies?

"I'll take them," I said finally, for the anticipated pleasure of their education and the fun of having three dogs to follow me offset the sorrow of the mother dog; and I added, "That is, if you don't say no, Captain."

"The matter is up to you, Bob," he replied and made no farther comment, while I snuggled them into the breast of my shirt and started on the way to the beach.

We had gone about half the distance when Stimson came to a stop. "Where's the raft, Bob?" he asked, and I took my eyes from my new family to look over the cove where we had left the "Cozy Cask." Nowhere was it visible.

"Could it have drifted away?" I asked anxiously, while Stimson adjusted the binoculars to focus.

He studied the shore line without replying, then moved over to where he had more extended view. "Not in sight," he said, at last.

"It may be close in on the beach behind some of the bluffs," I suggested.

"I hope so, though the bluffs are barely high enough to conceal it, unless it has wrecked and broken up. She couldn't drift very close to the beach, Bob."

I knew that she needed fully two feet of water to ride in safety and that the shingle ran gradually sloping into the sea, so if she was afloat as a whole she would be in sight, not behind the bluffs; and the knowledge came to me that the "Cozy Cask" was gone. Stimson had realized the fact almost at once, that she was either a wreck on the beach or had gone out to sea, and with it all our water and provisions.

I started at a limping run for the sea, but Stimson halted me with a cry. "No hurry now, Bob," he called. "Come back," and I rejoined him.

"What shall we do?" I asked, my anxiety heightened by immediate hunger and thirst.

"Will that foot of yours stand up for a ten-mile hike?" questioned Stimson in reply. I nodded doubtfully. "Then start back over the hills for the river," he commanded. "I am going to the beach to make certain the raft was stolen ——"

"Stolen?" I gasped.

"Stolen by the man who fired the shot last night. I will catch up with you before you have made many miles. If you hear me fire two shots in quick succession, turn back; I'll have found the raft. Otherwise make as many miles eastward as your wound will let you. We must have water and food."

"We have no matches."

"I know. There are ways to make fire. Water is the main thing, so start for it, Bob."

He left me the shotgun, and I began the painful journey back over the hills which I had already traveled twice, while he hurried for the beach. I was thirsty, my throat dry and my tongue swollen, but it was no time to be thinking of that. I still carried the three puppies and I was glad Stimson had not remembered them in his anxiety about the raft. I was sure he would have made me abandon them, but they were snugly asleep in my blouse, and I was willing to assume the extra burden.

I kept looking back as I walked, for Stimson was running toward the shore and I hoped each minute to see him wave his hand to indicate that he had found the raft; but he disappeared behind the hills and I saw him no more. Then as I limped on my way I hoped for the recall of the rifle shots, but they did not come. I came to the camp of the previous night and passed it, taking the direction Stimson had returned from the river. The sun rose higher and burned more fiercely; the cut in my heel ached and throbbed and each step was agony; my dry tongue felt like sandpaper in my mouth.

Hunger takes a quick second place for thirst. I had eaten nothing since noon the previous day and never in my life, even during the days of shipwreck and raft, had I been twenty-four hours without food, but I forgot hunger completely in my craving for water. I

believed myself thirsty the night before, but it was nothing to this thirstiness. Every nerve in me cried for water. It was my only thought.

I plodded heavily on, giving no attention to what was about me, seeing only the heat waves of the sun. The puppies awoke and whined, but I heard them vaguely as in a dream. I knew I was to keep going toward the east where there was water; that was all.

The remainder of that trip is a vague, fevered dream in my memory. Stimson told me how he caught up with me, I staggering on and on; and how I did not know him at all, or that he was with me. I had dropped the gun; fortunately, he found it; but I was holding to the crying puppies as though they were to save me. He helped me over the last half of the way, carrying me at times, supporting me always, and we made the river by two of the afternoon.

I do remember that drink, lying flat on my stomach in the wet mud of the bank, stopped from the bliss of absorbing all I wanted by Stimson's hand over my mouth. I remember his "Steady, Bob; take it easy. A little at a time does it," as he doled it out to me. I remember the puppies lapping drink at my side. I seemed to awake then to the pain of my wound and a desperate hunger.

"You'll be all right soon," said Stimson as I began to question how I came there. "You made it, Bob, and with some food in your stomach you'll be lively as a parrot."

"Did you find the raft?" I asked weakly, and Stimson shook his head. He was unbinding the rag from the cut and I saw his face draw into a scowl as he looked at it. My glance followed his to see a swollen and purplish foot that was ugly in line and coloring.

"Infected," said Stimson, then bit his lip to keep back other words.

"Don't be afraid to tell me," I said. "What is it?"

"Poisoned by the shell. I should have given it attention at the time. Now you're in for a sore foot."

"I have that," I said.

"You'll have worse. We're going to cure it, but it will take time. I should have done what I am going to do now at once and I'd have saved you some pain. No cut is safe in this climate. I should have known that, too, better than most men."

"It looked trifling enough," I said, for I did not want Stimson to blame himself. "I'll take any pain it costs without a howl, Captain."

He smiled. "Good boy!" he said. "First food, then I'll doctor you. I still have the chicken, Bob."

"Raw?" I asked, and even raw it sounded pleasantly to my ears.

"No; cooked. Broiled. Salted, too. Just as fine a chicken as you ever ate."

"Matches?" I queried.

"Plenty of ways to make fire. I might rub a stick into a bit of rotted log as they do all over the South

Sea islands, but that would raise blisters on my palms and take too long. I might use my watch crystal, filling its cavity with water to give me a convex lens, but why waste time with crudities when we have a perfect sun glass, readily unscrewed, thus"—he illustrated words with action—"in these binoculars."

He held the objective glass from one barrel of the binoculars so that a sunbeam focused on my hand and I drew it quickly away. It burned in the moment. "Give me a pinch of powder from the horn," he said, and placing it in a spot of sunshine, gathered dry grass, twigs and larger wood and built up material for a fire. Then, with a "Watch it, Bob!" he brought the glass to catch the sun, brought the bright spot down to pinhead size. The loose powder caught with a sizzle, setting the grass ablaze and, as quickly as a match could have done it, a fire was burning.

"Why, Captain," I said, "it is as simple as rolling off a log!"

"Simpler—when you have the glass." He spitted the fowl on a green wand, raked coals from the fire, and left me to turn it over the embers while he went down the stream for salt. That, too, was simple for the captain, knowing where to look on the rocks beside the river where the high tide would leave sea water to evaporate. He brought back salt and also a bundle of dry seaweed so big that he could barely carry it all.

"Why the kelp?" I asked him.

"You'll find out after dinner. Is it ready?"

"It has been smelling so delicious that I barely held myself away from it," I answered.

"Then to it," he commanded and we tore it apart with our fingers and ate as the cave men did and with all their voracity. It filled the vacancy of a full day's hunger quite acceptably, although I might have eaten more.

Stimson dug a shallow hole in the ground, piled the kelp above it and set it afire with some blazing brush to assist combustion. When it burned down to a fused mass of ash, he threw water upon it, breaking it up and forming it into a thick, sticky mud, which he allowed to cool. "Put your hoof into that, Bob," he said. "There's your medicine."

I pulled off the bandage and plunged my foot into the mess, then yanked it out with a yell. "Ouch!" I shouted. "It burns!"

"Not too hot?" asked Stimson, sticking his hand into the mud. "No. Back you go, Bob, with the foot. I said it would pain, but we're going to save that foot from coming off, and it will require heroic methods. Be a man!"

I tried to grin. "I agreed not to howl, Captain, and I won't again. Here goes," and I gritted my teeth as the sting went up the nerves of my leg. "What do you call this medicine?" I asked, when I could speak for the pain.

"It's an antiseptic, crude enough, but it will, I hope, kill the bacteria that have infected your cut. There's

iodine in that mess, Bob, quite a bit of it, and iodine is a germ destroyer. How does it feel now?"

"That iodine is working, Captain," I groaned. "If it doesn't kill me it ought to get the germs."

He kept my foot, buried well above the ankle, in that mud all the afternoon. After the first hour or so, it lost sensation and I was not uncomfortable. In the evening, after giving me a supper of broiled pheasant, he washed my foot, inspected it carefully, voiced approval of the treatment and gave me the cheerful information that I must keep it in the mess all night long. Again it hurt for a time upon immersion, but for a shorter period, and Stimson rigged up a sloping back of boughs for me to lean against, built a large camp-fire beside me, and made us both as comfortable as possible for the night.

I could not sleep a minute. The puppies,—I had already named them Rags, Tags and Jags—filled to the brim with chicken meat and pheasant broth, curled up beside me and snoozed happily. Even Stimson dozed off after a time. I was like one chained to a post, forced to retain a single position that cramped me and gave me aches in every muscle, that sent pains through my nerves and nightmares to my brain.

Our camp beside the river was in a bordering thicket of small trees and brush. Across the stream, some twenty yards wide, was a larger and thicker jungle which ran back through marsh-land to the high ground where began the mountains. Through the tops of

these trees I watched the moon rise, a great disc with one edge slightly nibbled, for it was in its last quarter, and from these trees I heard a long, lugubrious howl. It was a wailing cry, like nothing I could remember ever hearing on the island or elsewhere.

I did not like to awaken Stimson, for he was tired out and needed sleep. The rifle was within my reach, so I quietly threw the lever which pumped a cartridge into the chamber and held it across my knees, straining my eyes to pierce the black shadows of the wood across the river.

CHAPTER XVIII

I SEE A STRANGE SMOKE

THE wail came again, louder, closer, and I heard a splashing in the water beneath the tangle of trees. Stimson, awakening with all his faculties alert, whispered, "What's wrong, Bob?"

"A howl from across the river, very close," I answered. "Listen!"

It came again, sad and dismal, deep fraught with melancholy, and with it the sound of some animal taking to the water. I handed Stimson the rifle and he moved to the edge of the stream. The moon behind the foliage of the trees threw deep shadows on the river and we could see no more than a line of ripples, the wake of the swimmer, as it passed our camp.

Stimson threw new fuel on the fire, causing it to blaze up brightly. "Do you see anything out there?" he asked, returning to my side.

"No. It is too dark to see anything more than the line of the shore."

"It turned below there. I caught a flash of the water as it headed up-stream. Hush!"

We both listened tensely. I almost stopped breathing. Then came the sound of swimming, the splash of a large animal not accustomed to the water for travel. Stimson brought the rifle to his shoulder, but there was nothing to aim at, nothing to see, only a noise in the dark.

One of the puppies awoke and began to whine. Instantly there was a louder splashing and a crashing through the brush on our side of the river below the camp. Stimson began to chuckle as another noise reached our anxious ears. It was the sound of a dog shaking itself free of water.

"Bob," gasped the captain, between snorts of mirth, "it's the puppies' mother come after her babes. She has ——"

He was interrupted by another wail close to us, down the stream, a crescendo wail that ended in a sob. There were answering squeaks from the puppies, now excitedly squirming to leave me and respond to the call. It was convincing proof that the captain was right.

"What shall we do?" I asked, anxiously.

The mother dog heard the cries of her offspring and burst into excited barks. Fearing a charge upon the camp, Stimson raised the rifle, but the flaming fire was

better protection. The dog kept beyond the rim of its light.

"If you expect any sleep to-night, give her back her pups," Stimson answered. "The dog will howl all night long if she does nothing more dangerous."

"Not all the puppies, Captain?"

"Well, we might try giving her two. She may forget there were more than that when she left them."

"But I had them all named—Rags, Tags and Jags."

"Give her Jags, surely; it's a hard name to live up to; and Tags, if you can tell them apart. I really think, Bobbin, that she is entitled to two of her litter. She has come a long way for them, trailing us by scent across the moor, she has swum the river and is ready to fight the two of us to get them back. What do you say?"

"I'll do it," I said, sadly enough. "I haven't really felt right since I took them, Captain, but they were so cute and companionable I hated to let them go. We will give her two now, and if she isn't satisfied, I'll give her Rags."

I selected Rags from the three and thrust him into my blouse, giving Stimson Tags and Jags, and he took a burning faggot as a torch and carried them toward the shadows from whence had come the cries. I held the rifle ready, for I did not want Stimson eaten up by the mother in return for our generosity, but there was no danger. Perhaps she knew he was bringing back her family; anyway, she did not make appearance,

and Stimson set the puppies down in an open spot in the moonlight well beyond the light of our fire, returning to me, and in a minute the whining of the puppies was quieted by a glad bark from the mother, then silence rested on the night.

The excitement had made me forget my aches and, strangely enough, had quieted my tortured nerves and I went to sleep with my foot in the stiffening mud of the kelp. It was morning, and the paroquets were busily discussing our intrusion of the thicket when I opened my eyes.

Stimson and the shotgun were missing and I knew he was seeking breakfast. Rags had broken out of prison in my blouse and was investigating a pheasant bone which had been thoroughly cleaned the previous evening. The sun shone brightly through the openings in the foliage and the river ran slowly and softly beside me.

From the distance came the boom of the spatter gun. "Breakfast, Rags!" I cried, and the puppy made for me, climbing clumsily to my lap. I knew then that with Rags I should never fear when Stimson was away; I had another companion.

In a few minutes the captain came in bringing five bright plumaged birds about the size of wood-pigeons. "I don't know what they are," he said, "but they're breakfast. Bob, our island has more varieties of birds than I have seen any place I've been, and fewer varieties of wild animals. Except for the domestic beasts

gone wild and the turtles, we have seen one ocelot and a deer."

"Might they, too, have been brought to the island?" I asked, helping him dress the birds.

"Possibly their ancestors were imported. The ocelot is made a pet in many parts of southern America, and the idea of propagating deer is understandable. I have found signs of rabbits or hares, and I am certain that there are pigs here, but the only thing we have yet found that we can be sure is indigenous to the island is the galapago. How does the foot feel?"

"As though it wasn't there. I ache from the knee up, that's all."

"We'll see how it's coming after breakfast."

"Then can we start for home?"

Stimson laughed grimly. "Bob," he said, "you'll not be able to walk on that hoof for a week at least. I can't carry you over the mountains or yet around the coast, so we are not going home just at present."

"You might leave me here ——"

"I might, but won't," the captain interrupted. "There is one man on this island besides ourselves, maybe more. He fired a gun and took our raft. He hasn't indicated any friendly disposition toward us so far, and he knows we're here just as well as we know that he is, or was, here. Until I learn more about him, I'll not leave you alone at all."

"Could he be the Chinaman?"

"I have thought of that and it is quite possible. A

Chinese boat may be working the pearl oyster beds of Ostrich Bay and one of the fishermen may have wandered down the coast on a hunting trip. If you could travel, we'd soon find out, but we cannot take chances of their friendliness. They are not sociably inclined, I'm afraid. We'll lie close for a time until your foot mends."

"We never were poorer than we are right now," I said, thinking of all the comforts and even luxuries of our farm on the lake.

"We're rich, Bob,—rich!" cried Stimson, cheerily. "We have powder and shot, water and fire, shade and baths, warm nights and food. Think of what we have, not what we haven't."

We had breakfast then, evidence of Stimson's theory of our wealth, broiled birds that tasted as well as they looked, washed down by the cool water from the river. While Rags cleared away the bones, growling in quite a grown-up manner, the captain made investigation of my wound.

"You are to close your eyes," he commanded, "and keep them tight shut until I say open. I am the doctor and I'm the only one who is to view the case." I obeyed, and for a long half hour kept my eyes closed and my teeth tight clenched. If tears pushed through between my lids, no groan came from my lips.

"Open now," finally said the captain, and I wiped my eyes on my sleeve, to find my foot all bound up in tapa cloth bandages torn from Stimson's shirt. His face was pale, but his eyes were smiling.

"It's doing finely, Bob," he said. "The danger is past. Doesn't it feel easier?"

"You woke it into life again all right," I answered, "but it is quieting down now. It hurts less every minute."

"The poison is gone, the germs are dead and all it has to do is heal. I have it wrapped in leaves that I know are soothing, and time is going to do the rest. Just make up your mind that this is the best place in the world to be, and it won't take any time before you can leave it. In the meantime, suppose you fish."

"Hand me a line and hook and I will," I laughed, for I felt sure that his inventive genius could not master these necessities. He handed them to me, taking them from his pocket as I spoke. The line was a strong fiber of tapa and the hook was a thorn attached to a bit of the branch.

"I was all ready for you," he laughed, "even to bait. Now let me carry you to the river's edge and you can show me what there is below the surface water."

I fished all the morning with fair success, catching several of the perch-like fish we had found in Comfort River and our lake, and Stimson sat by or hunted grubs for bait. I used a number of hooks, for they dulled easily and had to be replaced, and I lost more fish than I landed through the crudeness of the tackle; but we had found a dinner that gave us variety, and we broiled fish on heated stones. Stimson found

berries, too, that were delicious, and our menu increased that afternoon by the addition of mussels. Down the river, where the tide of the sea offset the current, he found a rock almost covered with the molluscs.

As the days passed, marking continued healing of my wound, Stimson used all his ingenuity to keep me from dullness and save the hours from monotony. He would lie on the ground beside me and tell me stories from his personal experiences that were as thrilling as any fiction I had ever read. He had begun life—grown life—at sixteen as a lumber-jack in the Michigan woods, when timber was a great business in the state and the running of logs full of hazards and excitement. Five years later he came west and became a cattle herder in Wyoming, and later sheriff of the county where he lived. The Spanish American war had started him soldiering, and at its close, which found him in the Philippines, he crossed to Manchuria and gave his services to the Japanese. Since then he had fought in several countries, sickening of war and its suffering, and I had seen the conclusion of his employment as a soldier at Guayaquil.

Into this rough outline had been crowded adventures, the relation of which made many an hour seem short and pleasant. Stimson was not inclined to talk of himself, and I probably never would have learned so much regarding him had it not been for my wound and his desire to cheer me.

And I told him all about myself save the one thing I had decided to keep to myself, the fact that I was rich. It made so little difference anyway, and I was afraid that he might think it added to his responsibility for me. The fact that I came with him, roughing it on the "Sally B," he trying to save me the passage money home, might make him sorry that he let me, and I didn't want him sorry. I was glad I had come, no matter the outcome, and I wanted him glad. So I neglected to tell him that there was a fortune, awaiting me to claim it, up in San Francisco.

Our calendar, the log-book, was aboard the raft when it was stolen or drifted away, but I was keeping track of the days on a piece of stick, cutting notches as Robinson Crusoe did. It was a Sunday, marked by a cross, and we had been beside the river four days when we saw horses again and Stimson had his inspiration. A band of eight, coming a new way to water, passed within a hundred yards of us without discovering our presence. When they had drunk their fill at the river and trotted away, Stimson came to his feet with a bound.

"Bobbin," he said, speaking low but excitedly, "I'm going to get you a horse and take you home to Lake Plentiful."

"Fine!" I answered. "How?" I asked.

"Ever hear of creasing a horse?"

I shook my head. "Well, Bob, it's a method seldom used, because it is about the most hazardous manner of

capturing a horse that could be. If you don't get your horse, you kill it, but I have seen it done on the Pampas in Argentine. You shoot them."

"Cripple them so they can't get away?"

"No. There is a spot at the base of the neck where a rifle bullet will paralyze temporarily, but leave no permanent ill effects. It has to be careful shooting, because an inch either way will probably kill the horse. I never tried it, but I know the spot, and I may be able to get one horse out of two or three attempts."

"If you did crease one, should I be able to ride it?" I asked. "I am not a bronco buster, even when my foot is well."

"You have ridden, though?"

"Yes, kindly tempered horses on city streets. I can ride fairly well with a saddle under me, and stay on when there isn't a saddle, provided the horse is agreeable."

"Then don't worry about that. If I capture the horse, I can break it for you. I'll be off at daybreak to-morrow, so don't wonder where I am when you wake up."

He was away when I woke up next morning, but he did not return riding a horse. Instead he brought back the shell and most of the meat of a galapago, captured and killed by him with a club, not creased. He explained that he had found a runway to the river where the horses were habitually going to drink, but too late to serve him that day, and coming back up

the stream had encountered the turtle. He had turned it on its back and killed it without difficulty. Where it had been, he dug from the sand sixteen eggs.

We had turtle eggs for breakfast, roasted, and they were good eating. We had turtle meat for dinner and it was tender and juicy, although memory took away some of my relish of it. I never shall like turtle meat.

The next morning I was awakened at daylight by Stimson's effort to make a quiet departure and not awaken me. "I would give a Buddha pearl for a cup of hot coffee," he said, when he found I was awake.

"Get the horse and we'll go back to coffee with cream and sugar; also hot cakes and butter, bananas and breadfruit, pineapples and such. Does your mouth water?"

"It does. What do we have for breakfast, Bob?"

"Turtle eggs, boiled."

"Boiled? What in?"

"Never you mind. You are to crease a horse and I am to boil eggs. Don't imagine you have all the inventive genius in camp, Captain. I have an idea now and then myself."

He grinned as he took the rifle and went down the stream in the dim light of dawn and I began limping around in my preparations to make good my boast of boiled eggs. We had but two ways of cooking in camp up to now, broiling over the coals or baking under them, for there was not a single utensil of any kind. It was the turtle's shell which gave me the

idea. Of course it would not long stand the heat of a fire beneath it, but might not water be brought to a boil in it some other way?

I made up a large fire and in the heart of it placed stones brought from the river bed; then I placed enough water in the shell to cover the eggs and the stones I intended should do the heating. I made a pair of tongs from green wood, to carry the stones from the fire to the shell, and I waited for the stones to heat.

I heard Stimson's rifle crack in the far distance and felt the excitement of a great hope of success. If he had landed his bullet in the proper spot we might start back home that day, and I was homesick for our farm. I hobbled to the edge of the thicket and looked across the plain, trusting to see some sign of him, but there was nothing down the river. The sun was rising over the hills in the east; to the west were the hills that made the wide moor to the sea. Above the sky-line, in one place, there arose what I thought at first was a cloud of dust. I watched it eagerly, believing it might be the horses, trusting one was down, but there was no shifting of the dust. It was not dust. As the sun struck it, it became white, not yellow. It was smoke, the smoke of a fire beyond the edge of the hill.

It could not be Stimson. He had gone in another direction, and he had no way to build a fire if he wanted one. I went back to camp, knowing that there

were other people out on the moor between us and the sea.

The stones in the fire were almost red hot, and I dropped them carefully, one by one, into the tortoise shell. The water steamed, then bubbled and boiled. I had found a way to cook, and the captain did not tell me; out of my own head I had evolved a scheme that bettered our condition and made life pleasanter.

Stimson came breaking through the brush just as I was ready with boiled eggs—a trifle too well done for breakfast, perhaps, but piping hot and a change of the menu. He shook his head in negation of my question before it was spoken. "Killed a horse," he said unsmilingly. "Missed the spot, Bob, and killed the poor beast."

"Not the black stallion?" I asked, quickly.

"No. Didn't see him. A bay."

"Never mind, Captain. Eat your breakfast," and I grinned at the look of astonishment that came to his face as he saw the boiled eggs.

"How did you do that, Bob?" he asked, and he gave me praise for my ingenuity when I had explained. "I never thought of it," he said.

I told him of the smoke cloud in the hills, asking if he had seen it, but it was outside the range of his trip. He was worried over it and as soon as we finished breakfast had me lead him to the place I had been and point out where it had shown on the skyline, for it was not there now. He estimated the dis-

tance at five miles and doubted that his shot had been heard. "Still, they may have seen the smoke of our fire as you saw theirs," he said, "or even the blaze of it last night. If I dared leave you, Bob, I'd scout about over there and find out who and what they are, but I dare not take the chance. They may be scouting for our camp. Could you make out to hobble a few miles if I build you a crutch?"

"The foot is fine, Captain. I'll get along."

"Then we change our camp to-day, Bob. Come on," and we hurried back to the river.

CHAPTER XIX

A COWARD'S SHOT

THE crotch of a branch under my arm, my tortoise-shell boiler tied to my back and Rags in my blouse, I fell in behind Stimson, laden with the rest of our slight camp equipage. We were going up the river, not because it was good strategy, but because we were in no condition to go down-stream.

"If they're looking for us," explained Stimson, "they" referring to whatever caused the smoke on the moor, stole our raft and fired a gun in the night, "they'll hunt for us up-stream because that is the direction of fresh water, so we should go down to fool them. But we can't carry sufficient water with us to last, and I am not certain enough that we're being hunted to want to risk thirst. We'll hide out beside the fresh water, Bob."

The early part of our journey was easy traveling, for the river ran sluggishly between low plains that were often marsh-land, but by making détours we could keep to the solid ground and free from the jungle-like thicket of the bank. Stimson carried the two guns, and around his waist was wound a hide rope that he had cut from the skin of the wild horse shot that morning. At each turn of the river's course we frightened up flocks of water-fowl, but we were not anxious to increase our burdens or indicate the direction of our flight by firing the gun.

After an hour or so we began to climb. The rolling moor had reached the foot-hills and we soon came to a place where the river, now narrow but deep, ran through a canyon which was impassable. We took to the hillside, a hundred feet above the water, and our progress became a succession of short advances and long rests. My foot was not yet strong enough for mountain climbing and the crutch helped but little. It was Stimson's strong arm about me that kept me going forward at all.

For another stretch of time that seemed interminable, we climbed and rested, climbed and rested, then climbed again, until turning around a rocky crag we came suddenly out upon a plateau that overlooked the sea to east and south. It was a strange break in the ragged range of hills. In contrast with what we had passed through, the arid moors and the rock bluffs, it was fertile, covered with a long, harsh grass. Irregular in

the contour of its area, we could see but a small part of it, sparsely set with dwarfed, misshapen trees, like oaks that grow against the pressure of strong winds.

We came upon this unexpected stretch of grateful green after the hardest stretch of climbing on the journey and for a few minutes we looked across it with the pleasure of its freshness and vivid color in contrast with the hot rocks we clambered across to reach it. Almost simultaneously Stimson and I saw a herd of horses at its farther side and the captain drew me down into the grass beside him.

"This is the summer pasture of the island, Bob," whispered Stimson. "I have wondered where the live stock found feed during the dry spell."

"Why is it so much greener here?" I asked, in the same cautious manner.

"The explanation is over there." Stimson pointed out to sea where a fog bank was slowly rolling in. "There is some kink in the mountain formation here that catches the fogs, and they water this flat."

"Are you going to crease a horse?" I asked, looking again at the herd still feeding undisturbed in the distance.

"I'm going to try to stalk them," Stimson replied, handing me the shotgun and looking carefully to his rifle sights. "You stay here and I'll try antelope hunting on them. There's just a bare chance that I get within range."

"They are feeding toward us."

"But the fog will be in before they get within range. I must go to them if I want a shot. Stay here and lie low."

Crouching so that only the top of his head was above the grass, Stimson ran forward, his eyes on the horses, then dropped like a flash. One of them had seen him or his movement in the grass, for it threw up its head with a startled whinny. The other animals ceased feeding and all looked toward him and I expected the next second they would kick hoofs in air and fly. They sniffed the air, moved uneasily, huddling closer together, but they remained and Stimson lay prone without motion. Convinced that there was some mistake in the warning, the animals began again to feed.

Through the tops of the waving grass I saw Stimson take another spurt forward, gaining a hundred yards before he dropped like a shot. The horses were extremely uneasy now. With heads held high, whiffing the wind, they started away, then halted and came back. It was a strange movement, for I was certain they had intended to fly. Something had stopped them, something called them back.

Raising my head higher, I saw what it was. Above the grass where Stimson lay concealed waved a bright red bit of cloth which I knew was the remnant of the captain's bandana. Slowly, rhythmically, it moved back and forth, and step by step the horses approached it. Curiosity was proving stronger than their fears.

It was a breathless time for me watching there. The

horses stopped their slow advance beside a clump of trees, bunching together ready to fly, and I expected to hear the crack of Stimson's rifle. Instead the red rag waved again closer to the startled animals. Stimson had made another running gain. Now he flirted with their curiosity not a hundred yards away.

He would surely fire now, I thought, but minute after minute went by, the animals advancing and pausing, the flag slowly waving. Then it suddenly fell and I heard a shrill scream from the captain. The head of every horse was thrown high in air; there was an instant of suspense, then the rifle spoke. One horse dropped like a stone. The rest were gone in a cloud of dust.

Jumping to my feet, I hobbled on my crutch as swiftly as I might to where the captain was now beside the fallen horse. He did not look up at my approach, but was binding rawhide ropes to both fore and hind feet of the animal, short ropes for hobbles. A slip noose was placed over the head about the throat, Stimson testing its strength with care as he uncoiled it. The other end of the rope he snubbed about the trunk of a tree.

"Bad place for horse breaking, Bobbin," he said to me, working with speed and sureness. "Too many trees. If he doesn't beat my brains out he may his own."

"Take care of yourself, Captain," I cried anxiously. The horse was getting to its feet, first sitting on its

haunches and shaking the numbness from its head, then with a leap in the air landing on all four legs. For just an instant he stood still while Stimson hauled in the slack of the rawhide, then away he went cavorting and bucking, brandishing his hobbled hoofs, pitching forward and back, trying to break from the cords and the rope. Stimson held at the rope's end, watching it for weaknesses rather than the struggling horse.

It was not a wide circle that limited the struggle, for the lariat was short, but Stimson reduced the size, bringing the horse closer in until he could place a hand lightly on the stallion's neck, a proceeding that precipitated another fierce battle. If the horse had not been affected by the blow of the bullet, the encounter between man and horse might have been longer and more serious. As it was, it kept my heart in my throat for half an hour. Stimson gave him but little headway, fearing his plunges among the trees and rocks, holding him by a shortened rope and keeping well out of the way of his vicious teeth and hoofs. Finally he muzzled him with a twist of the line about jaw and nostrils, all the while patting him softly and speaking to him with gentle command in his tones.

When I saw Stimson loosen the hitch around the tree, I believed that the struggle was over, but I was mistaken. It was preliminary to an attempt to get the stallion into better training grounds, beyond the trees, and neither horse nor Stimson had any idea of giving

over the battle. With the loosening of the lariat, the horse made a lunge for it, and the captain was dragged for a rod or more, digging his feet into the turf and holding back with all his strength and weight. Had he not been able to take advantage of another tree trunk, snubbing the rope about it, I believe the stallion would have escaped.

They were more than an hour going the short distance to the clear plain beyond the trees, but it was finally won, and Stimson assumed the aggressive. Here was room to work, room to throw kinks in the rope that would catch a leg in a snare and trip the stallion to his knees. It was wonderful lariat handling, and the horse, already tired from its struggling, became each minute more subdued and tractable. Each time Stimson threw the horse he closed in on him, fondling and talking to him softly as though the animal could understand.

At last the stallion stood, shaking in every limb, and allowed the captain to wipe from his glossy sides the foam and perspiration of the struggle, and Stimson cut loose the hobbles. Then came the last test of strength. Taking advantage of the freedom of his limbs the stallion started a run which lasted but an instant, for the captain had expected it and was prepared with a cunning twist of the rope which threw the animal heavily to his side, where he lay panting and exhausted. Stimson, lying across him, holding his head down, thrust a piece of the rope as a bit between the jaws,

making it fast behind the ears and under the mouth, a crude bridle; then he loosened the noose that had cut off the horse's wind and urged the animal to rise. The minute it was on its feet Stimson was across its back, heels gripping at the sides, one hand wound in a lock of the mane, the other taut on the bridle rein.

There was a minute or two of plunging and bucking, but the captain had known horses that bucked harder and with better knowledge of the subject, and he stuck like a burr. The stallion changed tactics and ran. Stimson let him run, knowing that he would soon tire; and somehow he guided him, circling about the plain, keeping clear of the trees and rocks. After a time the horse would have quieted to a trot, but Stimson began the urging, forcing him to a gallop each time he showed desire to stop. The battle was over and Stimson had won. He rode up to me, the horse quivering at the proximity but obedient, and jumping to the ground, placed the rope in my hand.

"Here, Bobbin," he said, "is a fairly tractable riding horse for you. Treat him right and he'll soon eat out of your hand."

"For me, Captain?" I gasped.

"Sure, lad. I own a black stallion, still free on the plains. This bay horse is yours, and to-morrow you shall ride, not walk."

"I'll try it," I said dubiously, for I held no conviction of my ability to stay a minute on his back, and I led the bay stallion to the cliff beside the river from

whence we had first seen him. Here, hobbled and at the end of a tether, he was allowed to recover from his efforts and soon was eating grass as comfortably as though free.

Because the fog had crept in like a white veil, shutting off extended view and blotting out the sun, we made camp at once and had a cold supper of the turtle meat, for there was no way of lighting a fire in the mist. Stimson, taking the turtle shell, climbed down to the stream for water. As was his custom always, he carried the rifle, and a moment later when I heard a shot I had no other thought than that he had fired and wondered what had caused him to sacrifice a cartridge.

When he climbed over the brow of the cliff I knew he had not shot, for the rifle still hung in its sling over his shoulder and both hands were occupied with the tortoise shell. There was a troubled look on his face, too, a warning in his eyes, and his lips were pursed in a dumb caution to silence. I grasped the shotgun and crept to meet him.

"Drink—drink all you can," he whispered, and I saw then that the shell receptacle was leaking. Although Stimson's thumb covered the hole, water was oozing away through a long crack that ran from the bullet's entrance. I placed my lips to the shell's edge and drank my fill.

Dropping the now useless receptacle, Stimson, pushing me before him, hurried through the grass along the rim of the bluffs, running with his head turned back

to see what followed, covering my body with his own, lifting me when I stumbled, urging me in whispers to keep up and go forward. For a hundred yards we ran and hobbled through the fog, then Stimson sank to the ground, pressed me down beside him and started squirming through the grass at right angles to the line of our flight.

By a pressure of his hand on my arm, he signaled me to stop and crept alongside, unslinging the rifle and quickly loading it. Cautiously he raised his head above the grass tops, and for a long time studied the murky, fog-enshrouded landscape, then sank back beside me.

"We've dodged them," he whispered, "thanks to the fog. How do you like being the game at the hunt, Bob?"

"Who is hunting us?" I asked in reply.

"Jiminetty! I wish I knew! A musket slug through the turtle shell is the evidence of intention, and it was aimed at me, not the shell."

"You didn't see who fired the shot?"

"Not even the smoke of a gun. A coward's shot from ambush."

"Were there more than one?"

"Yes. I do not believe one man would dare the chance, for you were armed, even if he had killed me. Two or maybe more of them, I'm sure."

"But why ——?"

"We must find out, Bob. We must know who they

are and why they are hostile, but the first thing is to get back to our hut on the lake where we can make ourselves safe and secure. Now try to sleep, Bob."

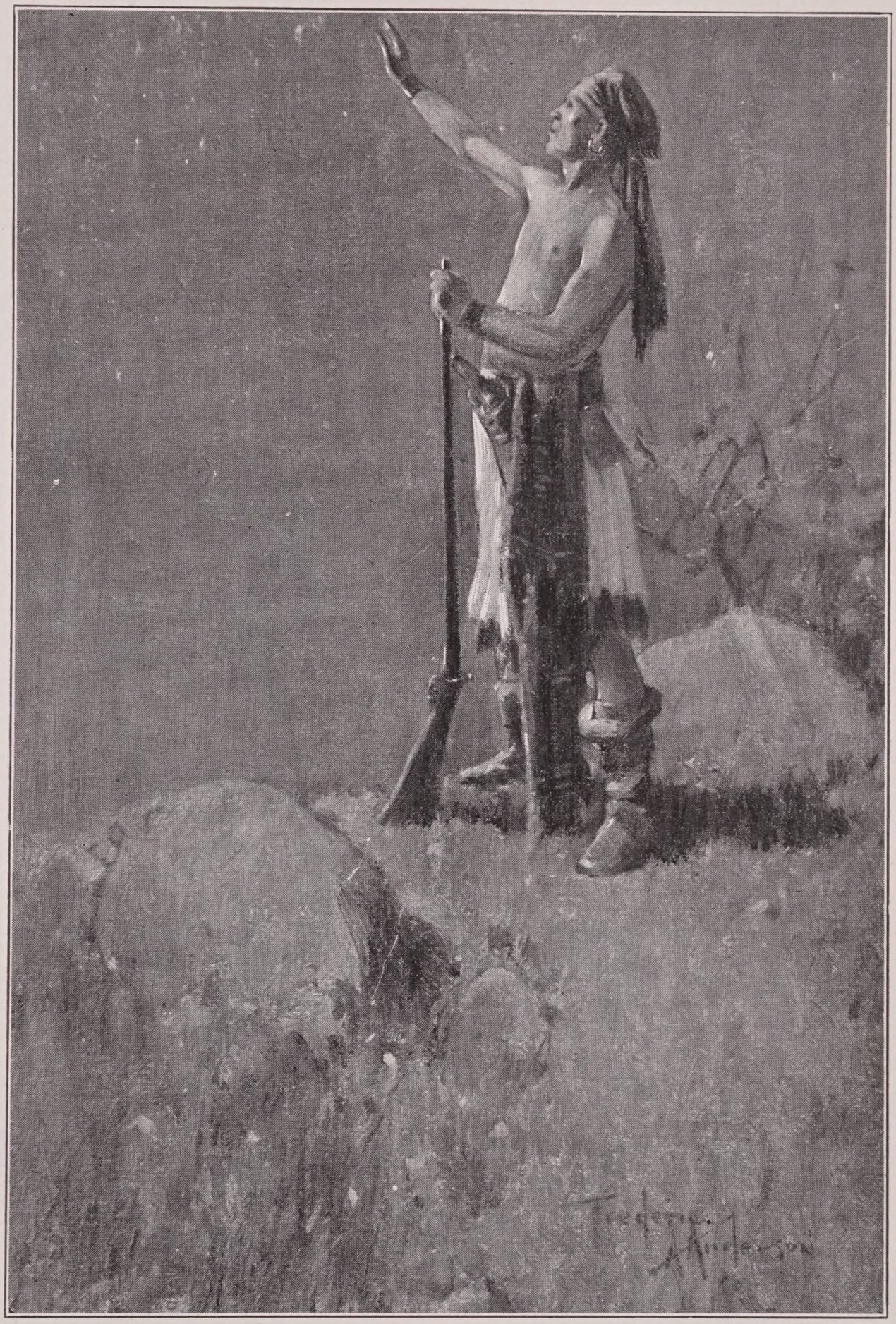
Night had fallen and soon the fog thinned away on a breeze from the east and stars began to show above us. Snuggling close to Stimson I lay and watched them come out from the mist and I did my best to forget this new element of danger, but the thought persisted. Here was I like the pheasant I had wounded a few days before, hiding in the grass, seeking concealing shelter from the hunter. We were no longer the hunters, but the hunted.

Hours passed with desperate slowness and the moon came up above the crags of the mountains to the east. The captain was asleep, I knew, for his breath came and went with slow regularity, and my eyes, tired with staring at the skies, closed in weariness. Then the stallion whinnied, startled.

I shook Stimson awake. "The horse!" I whispered. "Listen!"

We could hear its frightened snorting, the trampling of hoofs.

"They shan't steal the horse!" Stimson breathed indignantly, snatching the rifle. "Wait here, Bob," and began a crouched run through the grass, disappearing in an instant from my view. A long delay while my heart beat suffocatingly, then a whinny of recognition from the stallion, and I knew the captain was there. Another time of absolute quiet that



HE WAS WITHIN EASY RANGE

seemed interminable. I raised my eyes cautiously above the line of the grass and looked toward where the horse was concealed, but there was only the grass and rocks and trees touched by the moon's rays and the blackness of their shadows beneath. As I lowered my head, some movement behind me caused my eyes to turn over my shoulder, and I saw a figure glide from the shadow of a rock at the edge of the stream and step into the moonlight.

It was a man. In the half minute he stood there I saw him plainly, for he was not a hundred feet away and his face was toward the moon. He was dark, swarthy, black of hair, and his muscular body was bare of clothes. On his head was a cloth or turban and there were rings in his ears that glittered in the moonlight. He raised his hand above his head to the full length of his arm, held it there a moment, then dropped it, a signal to some one I could not see; and he melted again into the shadow.

I was sure he had not seen me, knew nothing of my presence there, for he was within easy range of the rifle, even the shotgun which I held loaded with shot and slugs. I could have wounded him, perhaps killed him, had I wished and my aim been steady enough, and I wondered if Stimson might not have done so.

It was too late to answer the question practically, for he was gone; but I knew the answer so far as I was concerned. I could not have shot him as he stood there, apparently unarmed, doing no immediate harm

or injury to any one. That he was harmful, dangerous, ominous, a continual threat to our lives, I knew, but he was not a wild beast. I might kill a jaguar or a wild dog without a pang, but I could not shoot a man, except to save my life or the captain's.

A rustling of the grass close beside me brought the shotgun up ready for use, but it was Stimson who crept out of its tangle. "All right, Bob," he whispered. "I've moved the horse into the clump of trees where we downed him, and we'll join him there."

"Wait," I answered, and I told him what I had seen. He made me go over my description of the man.

"Brown skin, black hair," Stimson repeated after me. "Then he is not Chinese, and my theory of the pearl fishers is wrong. The turban and earrings suggest East India, but why and how here in the Galapagos? He might be Ecuadoran, but that would indicate at least a shirt; Kanaka—wouldn't have the turban. I give it up, Bob. Come along," and we crawled on hands and knees to the deep shadows of the clump of trees where the stallion, muzzled by a piece of tapa cloth that he might not discover our position to the lurkers, was tied to a tree. Beside him, we lay down and again tried to sleep. A long hour later I whispered sleepily, "Captain?"

"Yes, Bob."

"I'll call him Dan."

"Call who Dan?"

"My horse," and I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XX

INVADERS OF THE VALLEY

IT seemed but a minute later when Stimson awoke me, his fingers over my lips that I might make no sound. It was dark night yet, although there was the first indication of dawn in the east, and we prepared without delay to leave the sheltering clump of trees. Dan had objections to my mounting him, and I thought we must go through another struggle of breaking him, but Stimson's voice had a wonderfully soothing effect, and he cajoled the stallion into allowing me upon his back.

With Stimson leading Dan and Rags and I riding, we passed out of the little grove on its farther side, heading away from the stream in a northwesterly direction. When the sun burst into life, we had made several miles and the crags that indicated the river canyon were not even in sight from the rises, on one

of which we paused to make careful survey of the ground we had traversed looking for a sign of followers. After a long scrutiny Stimson spoke aloud for the first time. "We've left them behind, Bob," he said. "Either we have given them the slip or they're staying by the stream expecting us to return to it. There is no chance for concealment here."

"But we shall have to get back to water?" It was less a question than a statement of the fact that I was already thirsty, that the sun had been effective in its parching work.

"A little dry, Bob?" laughed the captain, and at my nod he started Dan on our way over the plain, which was already sending heat waves upward toward the blistering sun. "It won't be bothering you long. In an hour or so you'll be damp enough to feel uncomfortable."

Stimson was only exaggerating the length of time, for the fog began blowing in from the east in half an hour, and we were traveling through a gray mist that was almost rain. I let my tongue hang out of my upturned mouth and felt the soothing moisture seep into my system. I grew hungry but was no longer thirsty, and I knew that I could stand lack of food without complaint. The fog gave us security from pursuit, too, and we traveled by the compass until late in the afternoon, when Stimson made a turn at right angles, heading northeast.

We were upon a rocky plateau at the time, with

scarcely any grass or plant life to break the monotony of boulders and volcanic dust. For some time before this abrupt change in our direction, I had noticed Stimson studying our trail. Twice he had gone back considerable distances over our path, looking at the ground. Now he explained his actions. "If we are being trailed," he said, "which is likely enough, they're going to miss it here. In this ash dust our trail disappears with the first wind that stirs it. I have been in volcanic countries before, Bob, and I've tried to hunt deer in the ash, but there isn't a hope of trailing. It's too light and soft to hold a footprint. If they're following us, they have lost us before this, but because of the general direction of our trail since we started, they'll think we are headed for Ostrich Bay. That's the impression I have tried to give them. Now we're going to put all the night into a hike over the mountains to Lake Plentiful. We'll try to have breakfast at home, Bob."

No words could have sounded pleasanter in my ears, and my hunger grew less in the knowledge that we were headed toward food and comfort. I had never in my life been so homesick as I was then to be back in our nipa roofed hut on Lake Plentiful. Stimson urged Dan into a willing trot, he running beside him, his hand grasping the mane, relieving the strain of the pace.

Finally we came to the river canyon and Stimson found a trail down to the water. He was risking a

chance of our being discovered, but the fog was still dense, and unless we had the ill luck to run into our pursuers, they could not see us. We all had a drink of the clear, cold water, Dan, Rags, the captain and I, and we had a general cleaning up of dust and dirt. It was a greatly refreshed group of men and animals that resumed the journey.

Because the eastern bank of the river was here a precipitous crag that towered into the fog, we pushed our way up the river bottom, going slowly and carefully because of the loose rocks and treacherous holes in the bed of the stream. Stimson was anxious to get away from the stream, having a fear that one or more of our pursuers might be concealed in its windings, and kept his eyes bent upon the left bank for a possible climbing place, but for a mile no chance appeared. Then, coming in from the north, was a branch of the main stream, smaller and more turbulent, and we began climbing to its source.

"If night falls with us in this canyon," Stimson said, "it is good-bye to our hopes of getting breakfast at home. We'll have to camp out and wait for light."

"Can't we break out to right or left?" I asked, for even the thought of another night out was bitter to me.

"Keep your eyes open for that chance, Bob, and no matter how slight, we'll take it."

It came in a few minutes, and it needed no discoverer. At the top of the steepest rise we had struck, where the stream made a waterfall of nearly a hundred

feet, and we had to struggle up a zigzag way, foot by foot, Dan, good little mountain horse that he was, keeping his legs beneath him with masterly skill, there was a wooded glade where the sun was shining. It was a sunset radiance, dispelling the fog, and it came through a great fissure in the mountain, and out there were the rolling waters of the ocean, and, nearer by, the surf line of the shore of Ostrich Bay. I felt that we were nearly home, so long had the time seemed since we sailed away from the oyster beds.

Stimson, however, was not looking at the sea or shore. His eyes were upon the two peaks that reared at either side of the fissure in the mountain. "I've seen those before," he said, pointing to draw my attention. "Remember them, Bob?"

"When we were at Ostrich Bay?" I asked, guessing, for they brought no recollection to mind.

"No. You've seen them a score of times. Look again."

I gazed hard at them. "Why, Captain, they're not —they are! They're the peaks we see from home—back of the grove on Lake Plentiful."

"Correct! We're seeing them from the other side now, and that makes a difference. Bob, we will be looking down on our own lake when the moon comes up to-night, or I miss my guess. On, on, lad! Giddap, Dan!"

It was not the end of our difficulties, but the traveling was much easier than in the creek bottom, and we

made good time even after night fell. There was a pass between the source of the stream we had climbed and the beginning of the south fork of Comfort Creek, which was not more than two miles away, and we skirted the edge of the double peaks without having to climb them. When it became too dark to travel, we were descending the mountain, and we made a rough camp and waited for the moon to rise.

Except for one or two short rests, Stimson had been walking and running since daylight and I had been astride Dan's back, none too easy riding either, without a saddle; and we had slept hardly at all the night before. So it is no wonder that we fell asleep waiting for the late moon, nor are we to be blamed that we did not wake up until the sun shone hot in our faces, after eight o'clock next morning. I was the first to stir, for Rags was licking my hand, and I awoke the captain. "Moon's up!" I cried to him, and laughed as his eyes opened to the sun.

"I'm a pretty one!" he declared in disgust. "I certainly am getting lazy. We should be down there eating breakfast right now," and he pointed to where the lake cast back a golden reflection of the sun's glow.

"Never mind, Captain; we'll eat dinner there, anyway. I'm not as hungry now as I was last night. Shall I get Dan?"

"See if he'll let you." Stimson had hobbled Dan and staked him out where he might graze in the interval of the moon's rising.

I went toward the horse, talking to him as Stimson did, but he was not yet ready to recognize my authority. He backed away to the end of the rope, and I feared would go farther, taking a remnant of the line with him if I persisted, so I had to call Stimson to help. He walked up to Dan and patted him, and Dan liked it; and again Stimson introduced me to my own horse, letting Dan smell me all over.

"Isn't it strange he still fears me?" I asked, but Stimson explained it as the odor of Rags upon me.

"Dan smells the dog, and dogs are not so friendly here as they are in civilized stables. We must have Dan and Rags friends, then your horse will take kindly to you."

Rags had no objections to being nosed by Dan and, after several jumps and snorts, the bay stallion decided the puppy was not going to eat him, and we all became friends. It was the last time that Dan was afraid of me, ever.

It was early in the afternoon when we struck the end of Lake Plentiful, down by the bamboo swamp, and the rest of the distance was a canter along the beach. I was the only one of the four who could not run and frolic, but, perched on Dan, I let my heart gallop happily as the familiar landmarks came into view. There was the grove, and at its edge, grazing contentedly, were the cow and calf; and how the calf had grown! They looked up at us in startled surprise, then resumed feeding. We could see the hut now, its door closed as we had left it, its stone chimney smoke-

less. That was reassurance to us, for we had held a fear that it might not be a tenantless house.

Out on the lake was the duck family, father, mother and three youthful ducklings. Behind the stable, pecking briskly, was our flock of chickens, augmented by several wild fowls that flew away at our approach, shy of humankind. The gorgeous plumaged guan and his modest tinted mate sat side by side on the stable roof. It was all just as though we had not been away at all.

The first thing was food. We had not had a bite to eat, Stimson and Rags and I, since supper two days before, a matter of more than forty hours, and our last meal had been cold turtle and not enough of that. While I started a fire and beat up pancake batter, the captain killed a couple of young cockerels and gathered his arms full of fruit, and we had a real dinner. Rags stuffed himself until he was almost as round as a ball.

I might have completely forgotten the menace of other human beings on the island in the comforts and friendships of our farmyard of domesticated animals had not Stimson mentioned it that evening as we sat before the cheerful blaze in the fireplace. "Bob," he said, "we'll have to go at sentry duty at once. I should like to risk their not locating us to-night, for we both need sleep; but I do not dare. If we dodged them yesterday, as I believe we did, it is only a matter of hours when they discover us again. So you take the first watch until midnight and I'll sleep now."

"You'll have the late watch again, Captain. That isn't fair."

"I should not allow you on sentry duty at all with your wound, but we're short handed in this regiment, Bob, so you will have to take your turn."

"I'm able and willing. Give me my orders, Captain." I raised my hand to my forehead in a military salute as I had seen the soldiers do in Guayaquil, and Stimson laughed.

"Your stand is before the cabin door. You will be armed with the rifle, loaded and cocked. You will keep watch up and down the lake and keep your ears open in every direction. Should there be any unusual disturbance either among our own animals or the birds of the forest, you will awaken me at once. Should you see any skulkers, men, not animals, you will fire once in the air, reload, then wait for me, unless you are attacked or fired upon. In such a case, shoot to kill." The captain's order, which had begun as a pleasantry, ended grimly enough.

"Shoot to kill?" I asked, repeating the phrase.

"Yes, Bob. Our lives are here in our own keeping, under God's law. I fear that men without respect for His law have come upon this island, and it is our duty to protect ourselves. If we are attacked, we will kill."

I went to my position soberly enough, closing the door behind me, shutting out the pleasant firelight and reassurance of the captain's presence. I felt very much alone in the darkness. A short distance before the

door was a tall palm tree and I took position at its base, leaning against the trunk to ease my foot. I dared not sit down for fear of falling asleep, and for the three hours of my watch kept my eyes and ears alert for any undue sight or sound. Probably because I had been through real dangers, I felt no fear of the starlit night, only a sense of loneliness and the dreariness of the waiting.

At midnight I called Stimson and rolled into my bunk without waiting to undress, nor did I lie awake a minute after he had left me. The next I knew it was morning.

Stimson was much fatigued and immediately after breakfast went to sleep, leaving me on guard. For the daylight sentry post we selected a tree at the edge of the grove from the lower branch of which we had an extended view up and down and across the lake as well as the hills behind the grove and beyond Roaring River. During the morning watch I began the education of Rags, for I foresaw many advantages in a properly schooled watch-dog.

I decided to teach him none of the house-pet tricks of standing on hind legs, speaking for cake, rolling over and being "dead dog." Such antics, while amusing, would be of little value in the Galapagos Islands. Rags should learn to follow at heel, to advance or fall back at command, to fetch or retrieve, to attack if desired, and he should learn to hunt if he was that kind of a dog.

Just what kind of a dog Rags was I did not know

and it seemed hard to guess. He was probably two months old and I judged him a rather well-sized pup for his age. If, as was quite likely, his father or mother or both were the attackers of the black stallion, I could have an idea of what he might look like when he arrived at a lookable age, for they had been similar to the two dogs we had first seen, short, wiry haired, looking a bit like deerhounds with collie blood somewhere in their ancestry.

I had brought several pieces of meat with me from the house as rewards of meritorious conduct in Rags and I began operations with the "Fetch it" trick, throwing a stick for Rags to return to me. I spent all that watch, between times in the tree crotch, getting Rags to take an interest in the stick at all, to make him realize that the stick had to do with him and his education. I might throw it near or far and the puppy did not care a particle, except to dodge out of its way if it threatened to hit him. My commands had no meaning to him; my actions were not understandable. I found out that education must begin at the very foundation with a wild dog, and that it would mean the exercise of all the ingenuity and patience I possessed to get over the foundation stones.

Rags earned his first bit of meat when he took the stick between his teeth at my command. When Stimson relieved me at noon, the puppy would take the stick in his mouth at my order about once in five times. And Stimson said I was doing finely!

It was during the captain's watch that we first knew that we had been followed into our valley. He brought me the information with instructions to drive Dan and the cattle into the center of the grove and picket them there, then rejoin him at the sentinel tree. It must have taken me the most of an hour to round up the cow and calf, for they were none too tame and my foot kept me from running, while I dared not trust Dan to assist me at the work. Finally I had horse and cows staked out and came back to the captain.

"What is it?" I asked excitedly, running to the foot of the tree where he sat in its branches. "Have you seen them?"

"Climb up here, Bob," Stimson commanded, not removing the glasses from his eyes.

I obeyed, he making room for me beside him, and he handed me the binoculars. "Train them on the top of the pass where we rounded the two peaks yesterday," he said, "and tell me what you see."

I did, adjusting the focus. As the crow flies, the peaks were at least a dozen miles away, but the powerful glass showed me five little specks that moved like ants on the side of the mountain. "Are those men?" I asked.

"Are they?" Stimson questioned me.

I did not reply at once, studying their movements. The leading speck stopped, and four others grouped about it, merging into one spot of black against the lighter background. Then that blotch broke up into

fragments which quickly became five moving specks again.

"I believe they are men," I answered, passing the glass back.

"So do I, and I've studied them for an hour. They are men, and they are headed this way. Now, Bob, I intend to find out who they are and what their intentions are if I can. It may be that they are as innocent of evil as ourselves, foreign sailors, shipwrecked and fearful of us. It does not explain the shot at me, but that, too, may have some rational explanation. Anyhow, I'm going to see."

He dropped lightly to the ground, then handed me the glass. "You are to stay up there, Bobbin, and watch what happens. You are going to have a view of it all, and I believe I can trust you to do what is necessary in case—well, in case things go badly. Goodbye for a time, lad."

"You will be careful, Captain!" I pleaded as he grasped my hand.

"I have to come back to look after you, Bob," he replied and ran lightly through the trees of the grove, his Mauser swinging at the shoulder.

Again I found that I was not so seriously frightened at being left alone and in danger. I hated to see Stimson go, hoped he would not thrust himself into peril, but there was none of the fear for myself that I had experienced in the first days of our adventure. Then the thought of the possibility of being left alone

on the island would have set me quaking; now I faced it with calmness, and I followed the oncoming figures through the glass without its trembling in my hand.

Stimson, riding Dan at a rapid canter, came out of the forest on the mountainside and I, watching for him, picked him up in the glasses before the intruders caught sight of his approach. He was plainly visible to me, not more than a mile away, and I could see that he was carrying the rifle in his hand ready for use. The remembrance that the Mauser could slay at a distance of a mile and that the slug which had pierced the tortoise shell was from an old-fashioned musket probably not accurate at two hundred yards, gave me added confidence in the captain's ability to take care of himself. Besides he had, in the holster at his side, five more leaden pellets fatal at shorter range, in the revolver which always snuggled there.

From him I turned the glass on the five men above, now certainly men under the powerful lenses, coming down the mountain, following our trail of the day before. They had evidently not seen Stimson, and I perceived the reason in a spur of the hill which shut him from their view. At their head was the man I had seen in the moonlight, distinguishable by his white turban. Three of the men carried either muskets or sticks, I could not be certain which at the distance.

Then they saw Stimson, who rode into their view waving a white rag at the end of his rifle. If they understood the truce signal they gave no indication of

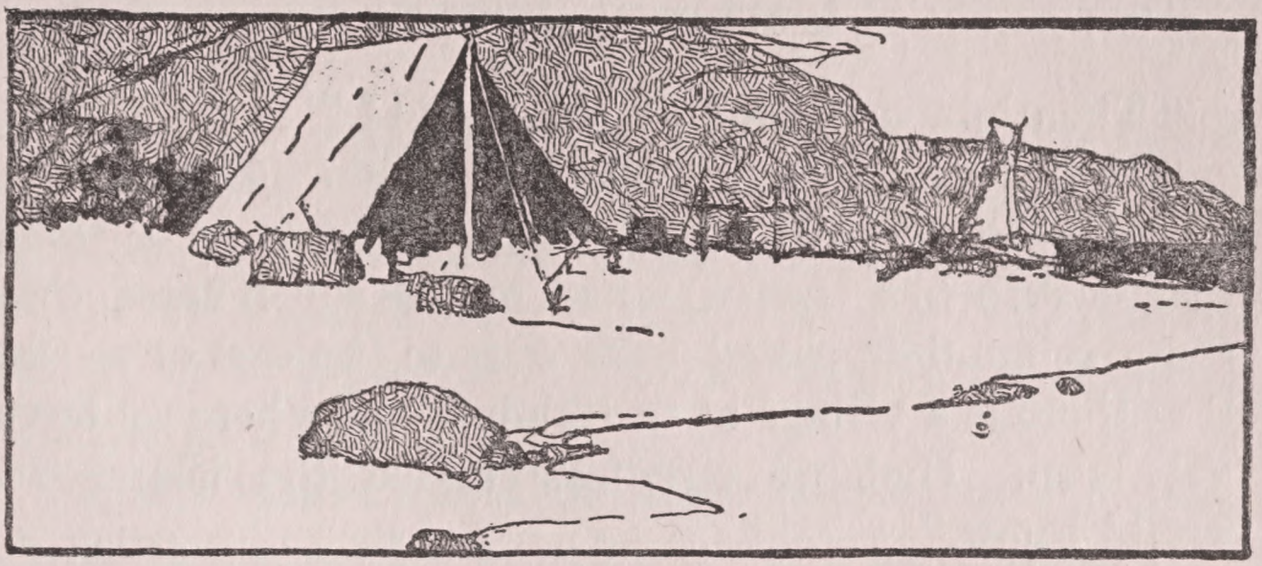
the fact, for they scrambled hurriedly into safe shelter behind boulders, disappearing completely from view. The captain rode forward at the same even pace, and I began to fidget for fear he was getting too close, but there was greater distance between them than seemed to me, for no shot came from the hill above him. Finally he dismounted, and I saw him bend down to fix the hobbles on Dan's legs; then he walked ahead alone.

He took the flag from the gun and waved it in his hand held high above his head, and I guessed he was shouting to them that he meant no harm and wished to hold converse. The answer was a puff of smoke from beside a rock. Stimson's arm still held aloft the cloth and he went forward again, determinedly. Another smoke wreath from another place and he stopped. He was either within range or too close for safety, but he waved the flag and shouted.

Perhaps they thought he had no ammunition for his rifle, or that he would not use it, for one man ran from behind a boulder toward him and, stopping suddenly, raised his gun and aimed. Then Stimson's Mauser spurted, and I saw the man throw high his hands, the musket dropping, and he fell on his face. Two smoke puffs from behind rocks indicated where other guns were handled by concealed men.

The captain, gathering in both musket and ammunition from him whom he had shot, ran back to Dan, mounted quickly and began a circuit of the hiding

places of the intruders. I could guess that he was attempting to dislodge them, to force them to uncover, perhaps give him opportunity for another shot, but they were too wily. They had evidence of his marksmanship, and there was safety behind the rocks. He did not fire again nor did they, and at last he urged Dan into a gallop and came back as he had gone. I watched the mountainside where the men lay concealed, for I knew that Stimson would expect it of me, would ask for information of what they did after his departure, and for a long time I saw nothing of movement. Then the turbaned man came from his retreat, called to the others, and went to where the dead man lay. Here he was joined by three more men and for a minute or two they grouped there, to start again up the hill. Another halt and consultation which lasted longer. One broke from the others to go onward, three turning down the mountain toward our farm. The lone man joined them and four came into the forest beyond the grove just as Stimson rode up to the sentinel tree.



CHAPTER XXI

BESIEGED

"A MURDEROUS lot!" declared Stimson when I had given my information. "They are ruthless as wild animals, and more dangerous. We cannot be safe here until they are off the island or dead."

"Who are they?" I asked.

"The man I killed was a peon of Ecuador, the lowest kind of laborer, and a convicted felon. He had been branded."

"The man in the turban?"

"Indian of the east. The others I could not say."

"Are they pirates?" I asked.

Stimson smiled. "Not as you understand the word, Bob. They do not sail the main in a rakish craft and force their captives to walk the plank. Those romantic brutes are of the long dead past. The man I shot was not a sailor."

"Then how comes he on the island?"

"How came they all to the island? That is the question, Bob. We can make a number of guesses, that a ship has been wrecked on the south coast, that there is another island near ours to the east or south, that there is a village at the farther end where we have not been. Had we circumnavigated the island we would know."

"They stole our raft."

"They did, Bobbin lad, and they stole more. They stole what we did not know we owned. Look at that!" and Stimson handed me a pellet as big as a bullet which glistened in the sun like a rainbow although it was black as coal.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A black pearl from one of our shells left on the raft. That peon had found it and had it hidden in his belt. I took the belt to get his powder-flask and bullet pouch, and I found this. It is a little fortune, Bob, up in the States."

"More valuable than a white pearl?"

"Yes, less beautiful but rarer and more valuable. Here, it isn't worth a thought now, when thoughts may save our lives."

"You feel certain these men are not pearl fishers?"

"We saw nothing in Ostrich Bay yesterday. If these men were fishers they would have a boat, a schooner or sloop, and it would be at anchor there. I gave up that idea when we passed the bay."

"What are we going to do, Captain?"

"That's all questions rolled into one, Bob, and it must be answered in the next half hour. Four murderous men armed with at least two rifles are within a half hour of the grove. Shall we wait for them, go to them or go from them?"

"That musket would be better weapon for me than the shotgun," I cried eagerly. "Let's meet them."

"If we could meet them, I'd agree, but they will skulk, ambush, and murder, not fight. If I were certain that these four are all there are on the island, I would hunt them down like wild beasts, but there may be a colony of them at the other end. Our best move is to take Dan and travel southward."

"Abandon the farm? No, no, Captain! Don't!" In the excitement of my anxiety I leaped to the ground, forgetting the wound in my heel, and when I tried to rise the foot gave way under me. Stimson helped me up.

"That answers all questions," he said grimly, placing me on Dan's back. "We defend the hut the best we may until your hoof recovers."

"I am sorry," I said, but I was glad of the decision. I could not bear to think of the pirates, for such they were to me, occupying our cabin, despoiling our poultry yard, killing our cows. I could not believe them so dangerous with their old-fashioned muskets and cowardly ways.

At the hut, Stimson looked first to my wound, which

had reopened and was bleeding again. As he poulticed it with balsam of Peru, the gummy sap of a tree found in our grove, he expressed his satisfaction at the way it was healing. The infection was gone; there was no more poison, and with care it would quickly mend.

Beside our hut was a spring, and Stimson had always intended to pipe its water inside for the convenience of it, but it was one of the luxuries that had waited upon the necessities. There was a group of trees in a brush thicket around the spring, then no more trees until one reached the grove, a matter of a hundred yards. There was, however, considerable brush between, high enough to afford concealment for men, as might also the tall grass which had grown faster than our cattle could graze. As the captain pointed out, the marauders might creep up to our hut without our seeing them, no matter how keenly we watched.

"We must clean away," he said, "so we have a view in every direction as we now have in front and along the beach. The hut is like tinder, Bob, and they could burn it over our heads to-night."

"Can't we burn off the pasture?" I suggested.

"We will try. A month later and it would be easy, but the grass is still green from the rains. Fortunately the wind is right and let's hope that there is dead-wood enough in the brush to carry the fire."

"Will you burn the spring thicket?" I asked.

"No, for it would destroy our water supply. With

the brush gone, the spring would dry up. We'll have to guard the spring as well as the hut, Bob."

Stimson was tearing the sod away from about the house, clearing a space three yards wide of grass and combustibles, and he was soon ready to start the fire that was to remove all hiding places. Before doing so, he took several pieces of sail-cloth to the lake and returned with them soaking wet. Then he placed a match to dry grass he had raked together at the edge of his clearing.

The fire spread slowly at first, but gathered impetus as the wind caught the flames and soon a cloud of smoke was rising high above a crackle of burning pasture-land. The fire ran to the south and west, for the wind was in the northeast, and shortly Stimson was beating it out at the western barrier that it might not run clear to Bamboo Swamp. Because it did not burn with the fierceness of dry grass, he was able to control and check it, and except for smouldering clumps of brush it was all out at supper time and we had a complete circle of clearing about our cabin and spring, three hundred feet or more that we could control with our rifles.

"To-night," said Stimson, as we ate our evening meal, "while you keep guard, I am going to bring up a raft of bamboos, and to-morrow we build water pipes and bullet-proof our fort. If we are in for a siege, let's prepare for it."

"I wish I could go with you, Captain," I said wistfully.

"No, for two reasons, Bob. Some one has to keep them from the cabin, and it happens there are but two of us; and your foot wouldn't let you if I would. You have the more dangerous job of guarding the fort while I make a sortie. Keep inside and watch from the windows and door. Should they attack, aim true and fire quickly. There are five cartridges in the clip in the magazine and an extra clip at hand. You know how to load, you know how to aim. The rest is but to keep cool and not get excited. Remember that with the first shot fired I am on my way as fast as I can come, ready to help."

"I'll try not to be a coward," I said, and I had more confidence of doing the captain credit than I had ever felt before.

He left after dark, for he did not want to be spied upon, and he went on foot. Dan was tied in the thicket by the spring; the cow and her calf were still in the grove and I feared much would be discovered by the invaders. There, too, were our poultry and the main source of provision supply, the fruit trees. If the enemy was in possession of the grove, and we felt certain they were now there, we were shut off from our food center.

This was not an immediate difficulty, as there was sufficient of plantains, breadfruit, bananas and cocoanuts in the hut for several days, and the lake was well stocked with fish. It was a worry of the future, not for to-night, and Stimson's theory of taking up only

the worries of the present made me drive the thought from my mind. My worry was to see that no one of the four men came out of the grove, and I bent every faculty to that task.

A band of hapales amid the trees broke into wakefulness with scoldings and chatterings that aroused the birds to noisy clamor, and I knew our enemies were active there. It was several minutes before things quieted down, then in the silence I heard the crash of something falling. That was Stimson felling bamboos at the swamp, I decided, and I wondered if the men in the grove could hear. Something moved at the edge of the grove, a matter of sound, not sight. It was at the place closest to the hut. I cocked the rifle, laid it over the window ledge, and tried to make the binoculars pierce the blackness.

There was something in the trees close to the stable, but what it was neither eyes nor glasses could discover. I saw a movement in the shadows and I trained the sights of the rifle upon it, but did not fire. It was too indistinct for certainty, and Stimson had told me many times never to send a bullet at anything whose identity was in question. That was why men were killed for deer, he said, and so the life of our cow was saved that night, for a minute later she broke through the fringe of brush into the open land, followed by her calf. Somehow they had escaped from their tethers in the grove.

I felt happiness and relief as I made the circuit of

the other windows and door, looking long up the lake where I hoped to see the black moving shape of the captain's raft of bamboo. It was not in sight, nor was there other movement of a suspicious nature. All was as calm under the big, bright stars as though danger was unknown on Lake Plentiful.

Again the little monkeys raised warning in the grove, and I hastened to the west window, trying to find the cause. They were watchful sentinels, and I only wished I could interpret their excited chatterings. Now they were close to the stable which I had watched before with beating heart, and I gave a hasty glance around to see that the cow had not returned there. No, she and the calf were grazing beyond the burned area. They had not raised this disturbance of the tree dwellers.

A light flamed up there, sank, rose again; then began a crackling of swift burning brush. The stable was ablaze. Dry as tinder, its thatch of long leaves a ready laid bonfire, it went into flames and smoke like an explosion. It lit up the grove, the burned area between us, and it was reflected in the lake, an enormous torch. The bamboo frame began to burn with explosions like musket fire and I, at first, believed it was and dived below the window ledge, but the detonations were too rapid and numerous. It would have required a regiment to raise such a tattoo, so I crawled through the door and into the spring thicket where I might watch the fire without making a target of myself.

I had no doubt that the pillagers had set this fire, but their reason for it was not clear. The stable was in their territory, not ours, and its destruction could not seriously injure us and might handicap them. I did not believe it was wanton lawlessness; it had a purpose. What purpose?

The grating of a raft on the beach brought me to my feet and Stimson came running to the hut, keeping in the shadows. He joined me at the spring. "Have you seen any of them?" he asked quickly.

"Not even a shadow," I answered.

"They must be creeping up on us. Wait here," and he glided away to the hut.

He returned quickly. "Jiminetty!" he muttered. "Not a sign of them! What does it mean?" I could only shake my head. "I was sure the fire covered an attack. Didn't they shoot at you?"

"No. I thought they were shooting, though, when the bamboo began to burn."

"So did I until I saw the flames. Bob, you don't think they burned the stable just for fun?"

"Hardly. But I can't see any other purpose."

"We'll probably find out later. Let's get back into the hut, Bob."

From the window we watched the fire burn down and die out to a ruddy mass of coals against the black trees, and nothing happened to explain its reason. Then Stimson rolled into his bunk and went to sleep, leaving me to watch until midnight. He could sleep

any time he wished, apparently, dropping off into slumber almost instantly, and no matter how short the rest it gave him renewed strength and vigor.

I watched the grove and at short intervals made a circuit of the hut, studying the night shadows in every direction, but there was no cause for alarm. The time came to wake the captain, but I let it pass, willing to extend my watch, for I was not sleepy. All was so peaceful that I felt Stimson would not mind my disobedience in this, and almost did I pass over, unseeing, the answer to the problem of the burned stable.

I was at the window that overlooked the grove and my eyes were on its fringe of trees. The late moon in its last quarter had risen over the lake and gave an added light that made objects quite distinct except inside the shadow of the wood. I was certain no one could creep up on us now and, because the hapales and birds were silent in the grove, I felt sure the intruders were inactive. I raised my eyes to give them rest and saw a light far away on the mountain.

Instantly I aroused Stimson, pointing it out to him. "They have gone!" I cried joyfully. "They have run away! See, their camp-fire near the pass!"

"No, Bob," he said slowly. "They have come. The rest of their band has passed the peaks. The stable signaled them; that fire is their answer. There will be more men to fight in the morning—how many more we don't know. Into your bunk, for you have a battle on at daybreak, Bob, or I am no prophet."

CHAPTER XXII

THE BATTLE OF THE HUT

I DID sleep by bits and snatches, hearing Stimson in the intervals moving about outside. He was at work and I would rather have helped him, but he would not let me for my wound. I knew he was fortifying the hut, preparing it for battle, and it gave me comforting reassurance that he had technical knowledge of military preparedness. We would be at no disadvantage of position, surely, and he would try to offset the superior number of the enemy by increased efficiency in ourselves.

He aroused me before dawn, while it was still dark. "Say good-bye to Dan," he told me. "I am going to send him back to the moors."

"Why, Captain?" I asked, for this was a sad blow to me.

"They would shoot him at once, and you wouldn't

have Dan shot, Bob. He's much better back with his mates."

I patted the horse's neck while he nosed me over gently. "Good-bye, Dan," I whispered in his ear. "I'll come for you again, maybe," and the captain loosened the tether rope, leaving him free. For the first time since we had him Dan was clear of hobbles and halters. He started away happily enough, then turned and came back to us.

"He doesn't want to go, Captain!" I cried, but Stimson flourished the rope at him, driving him away.

"Giddap, Dan! Save your hide! Back to the wilds!" he cried, and started the stallion into a gallop. So he disappeared into the darkness.

"How about Rags?" I asked, sadly enough. "Must he go back to the woods?"

"He goes into the trenches with us, Bobbin. Come on and bring the musket."

All around the hut Stimson had built a trench, with a barricade at its outer side, deep enough so we might, standing erect, rest our rifles across it to aim. The ditch itself was about three feet deep, but bamboo posts and poles with dirt, sand and sods heaped against them added two feet more. Before the door of the hut this embankment was raised higher, so we might crawl within the cabin without exposing ourselves; and he had made a pipe line of bamboo to the spring. By pulling a stopper from the end of a cane we had a liberal supply of water in the trench.

We had breakfast then, and it was a good breakfast, with hot food and coffee. The coffee-pot, replenished, was put over the fire and Stimson with the rifle and I with the musket climbed into the ditch. There was the faint light in the east which told us that dawn would come quickly and we were ready for its coming.

"The thing I want to do," the captain explained to me, "is to find out as quickly as possible how many men there are against us. We know of four. I want to discover what the reinforcements are, for upon that depend our actions. We cannot fight a score of men; we might fight ten."

"Suppose there are a score?"

"Then the next thing we must discover is whether there is one man amongst them who can understand us, who is human enough so that we dare surrender to him. If you see American or European, especially United States, let me know at once."

"You don't mean to surrender, Captain?"

"I only hope I may, Bob; I hate this bloodshed. I am going a long way to avoid it, but not far enough to give them our lives. Head down, Bob! Here comes the sun!"

It did come like an explosion, waking to immediate life the grove and forest, starting the birds singing and the monkeys in their everlasting chatter. Then a musket shot put an end to the peaceful harmonies and discords of the woods, sending the birds away on

startled wing and the hapales scampering through the branches.

"It has begun," Stimson said, calmly, "and begun by them. Ready, Bob, and steady! Look out for a rush!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Musket shots; then Crack!

"There's a rifle over there," said Stimson. "Keep your eye open for the rifleman, Bob."

We had seen nothing yet but smoke wreaths from behind trees. I had heard bullets plug into the cabin sides and the crash of some broken dish, but I was not looking back to see what was happening to the hut. My eyes were watching the grove for sight of the enemy.

"Let them waste all the ammunition they please," cautioned the captain. "We'll hold our fire to stop the rush. Have you seen any one yet?"

"Not a man."

"And they haven't learned where we are. They're putting bullets through the hut hoping we're inside. I'll take a look from the other side."

Lowering his head, Stimson ran around the corner of the trench, disappearing from view. The rifle spoke again, then again, and more slugs from muskets whizzed overhead. As before, the musket reports came almost together, bang! bang! bang! Another pause, and a third rifle shot.

Stimson returned, coming from in front; he had circled the cabin. "No shooting from the other side,"

he said, "but there are men in the grove over there. I saw them moving around."

"They're at something yonder!" I whispered. "Look!"

Among the trunks of the trees a number of forms were moving, gathering in one place near the outer fringe of trees.

"Ready now, Bob. It's a charge," cried the captain, bringing his rifle to his shoulder just as the men broke with a shout from the woods. "Let them have it, Bob! Fire!" and I pulled trigger with muzzle aimed in the center of the group. Stimson's Mauser sent five bullets so closely one behind the other that it seemed a rattle, not a series of reports. Before I had ramrod down barrel on the powder charge, reloading, Stimson handed me his rifle. "Slip this clip in, Bob," he said, cool as he ever was; "you may use the Mauser now," and he was firing with the revolver.

It took but a second to place the clip of five cartridges in the magazine, but Stimson had dashed to the rear of the hut, and I heard him firing there. Nobody was in front of me to shoot at—nobody standing,—so I ran to join him. "Stopped it here," he said. "Come on," and we went around the house to where the fight had started.

I do not believe that it all lasted more than a minute. Stimson had fired five shots from rifle, and five from revolver, and I had discharged the musket once. The enemy had emptied what guns they had, retiring

more quickly than they came; or such as were able had retired. There were four motionless clumps of clothing lying in the burned stubble close to the line of the grove. Another man, Stimson told me, was at the other side of the house, badly wounded. At least five of our aggressors were out of the battle.

"There are not more than ten or twelve left, Bob," said the captain, finishing the job of loading the musket, "and I believe they're shy of firearms. I am going to get the glasses and study this matter of weapons."

"I heard no shot fired from the other side of the hut," I suggested.

"They didn't fire. Eight men were running up when I turned the corner and began on them. They stopped and went back promptly and quickly. I did not see a single musket."

Crack! A shot came from the grove, and it was not aimed at the hut. It splashed sand into our faces. "That was a rifle," said Stimson, "and whoever is using it can shoot. Did they have more than one rifle among them, Bob?"

"I think not. It was easy to distinguish its sound from the musket reports. I should say there was but one rifle."

Crack! Again a little shower of sand, and the zr-r-r-r of a deflected bullet singing through the air. Stimson grasped my arm and dragged me around the corner of the hut. "That man is getting too precise with his bullets," he said. "I wonder how he located us."

Stimson peered out above the ramparts and ducked down immediately as the rifle sounded its sharp warning. The bullet slapped into the earth where his head had been. "Jiminetty!" gasped the captain. "That man is worth the rest of them put together. I must find him, Bob."

He went to the other end of the trench, creeping low, and placing his cap on the end of the rifle, raised it carefully above the ground. Crack, slap! and it rolled into the ditch. Stimson picked it up ruefully.

"He's a sharpshooter, Bob. If the rest have sense to leave him on the job while they rush, we're gone. A little judgment and nerve right now and they win."

Fortunately for us, either judgment or nerve was lacking. The sickening results of their first charge were still too recent a memory, and Stimson was thinking fast. "You try the cap trick, Bob," he said, "while I see if I can locate him," and he crawled to the door of the hut, vanishing within.

I raised my hat as I had seen him do and heard two rifles speak almost simultaneously. There was a cry from the grove as something crashed in the branches. "I brought him down," Stimson said, rejoining me. "He was well up in a tree. Did he hit your hat?"

I looked at it, finding a hole through it, and I handed it to the captain. "I hope he can't raise rifle to shoulder again," Stimson muttered. "He's too clever for comfort. He's using a heavy bore, single shot breech loader." He had run a finger through

the hole in his cap, comparing its size with the hole in mine.

"Didn't you kill him?" I asked.

"I shot at the center of the smoke puff. I didn't see him at all, but I judge from the crash that he was hit. We'll know soon how badly he was wounded."

For a long while there were no more shots from the grove, although we invited them with hats and my blouse rigged up to look natural and careless. We made narrow peek-holes between the bamboos, scraping the sand away and forcing sods apart, but there was no one in sight in the grove. With frequent excursions about the hut and careful scrutiny of the grove the morning hours passed, and there was no further attack. The wounded man at the side of the cabin had crawled back to his fellows in the woods and we, knowing he was doing it, allowed it. None of the four near the grove had stirred.

"We're no better off for information than this morning," Stimson said after an elaborate effort with a dummy representation of myself had failed to draw their fire. "We know they have ten to fifteen men, a rifle and at least three muskets. Some of the others are armed with machetes and some with spears, and they are a mixed lot of South American peons, enganchadores, and coolies from China and India. I haven't seen a white man in the band. Who they are and how they got here is as much a mystery as ever."

"We know they want to kill us," I suggested, sadly.

"Yes, and they'll do it, too, unless we use our wits. We can't beat them fighting at this game. We're playing into their hands, sitting here waiting for them. A chance shot, night, thirst, hunger,—all are in their favor, Bob. They can lie hidden there and beat us, they can rush us or sneak up on us in the dark and we're done. No, we mustn't fight their way, but make them fight ours."

"Which is?"

"To outmaneuver them, pit our brains against theirs. We've been playing one trick over and over again. We'll play a new trick. You rig up the musket at that end of the pit with a fish-line hitched to the trigger and I'll get the shotgun up at this end. Fix yours as I do mine," and he went to work at the new plan without further words.

Watching him, I had shortly arranged the musket so that it might be discharged by a pull at the string and Stimson brought the end of his line to me. "Now, Bob," he said, "I am going to leave you the Mauser and I am going off on a scouting expedition with the revolver. The minute you see any one break from the cover of the woods, let loose your battery and pot him with the rifle. I don't expect you to land anything with the set guns, but they will add to the excitement. Make the Mauser do business."

"How long will you be gone, Captain?" I asked; I had learned not to ask how he was to get away. He always had a means to carry out his plans.

"If I am not back before dark, don't worry. Should I fire twice, quickly, make a run to me regardless of anything. Get to me just as quickly as you can, leaving it to me to protect you. Good-bye, Bobbin."

He shook my hand, then jumped from the trench and ran for the shore. In a second he was at the beach, dashing through the shallow water. There he gave a wild cry of defiance, echoed by musket shots and a howl of rage from the grove. A spattering of bullets against the surface of the lake marked the place where he had dived into deep water.

I did not see all this, for my eyes kept jumping back from Stimson to the trees where the men were concealed. Again the captain gave a yell, this time more of terror, and out from behind the trees rushed the outlaws, shouting and shooting. I pulled the trigger lines, jerking out an explosion like a cannon, for Stimson had loaded the guns with extra powder and added slugs; and I grabbed up the Mauser, waiting for the smoke to blow away. Stimson had said, "Make the Mauser do business," and I did not want to waste his cartridges.

As it lifted on the wind, I saw a confused group of men, some headed toward the lake, others running desperately for the trees, still others unable to run at all. In pointing the weapons, Stimson had guessed well. The buckshot had scattered widely, the distance being great, and three men who were down were not

the only ones wounded. There were men holding their faces in their hands, men hopping on one foot, men groaning with body wounds.

The white-turbaned Indian was running toward the beach, holding his musket high in air. Behind him were three other men, and they were all armed with guns. Aiming quickly at the foremost, I fired and missed. I had been too eager, too excited. My nerves were on edge, my hand shook.

I rested the rifle across the barrier. By an effort of will I forced myself to be calm. I brought the rifle sights into bearing on the white turban, then dropped lower, aiming at the body. I pressed the trigger steadily. It was a straightaway shot at a running man at less than three hundred yards with a rifle that carried true, pointblank, at almost double that distance.

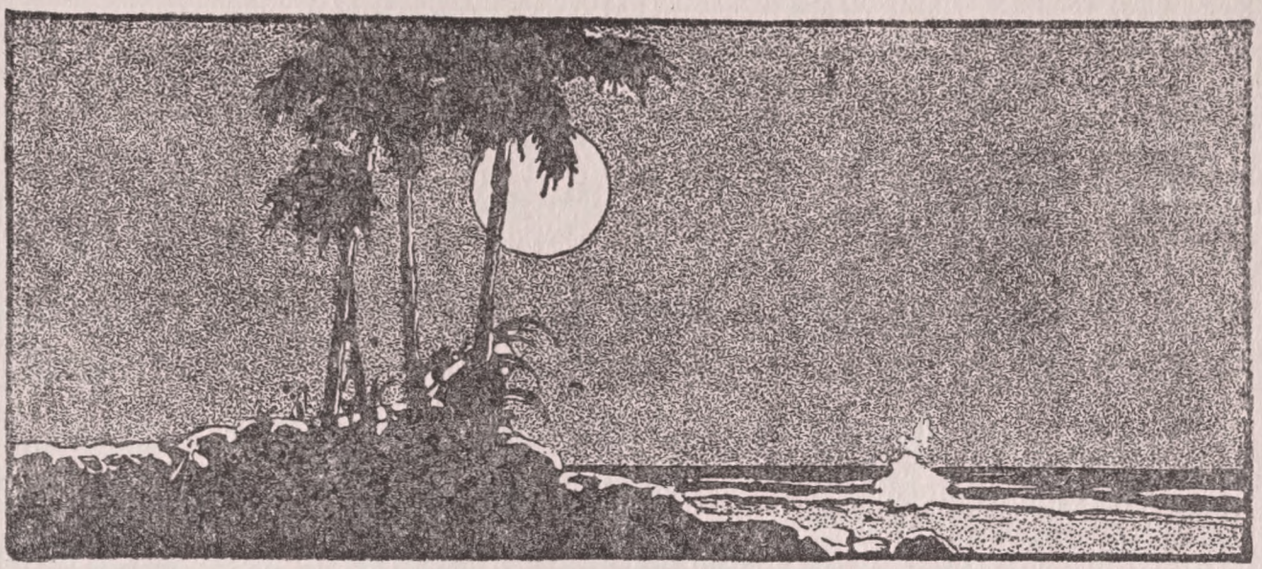
Stimson would have fired a full clip, five cartridges, while I was aiming that shot, each as true to its mark, but with the bark of the rifle the Indian spun around as though struck by a heavy rock. His musket flew through the air. I thought he would fall, but he pulled himself up and began a zigzag run for the trees, stumbling and swaying.

The three others followed him, one picking up the musket as he passed it, and I did not shoot again. I could not, they running for escape, even though I knew that they would be attempting my life and Stimson's as soon as they regained shelter; that our only safety was in treating them as we would mad dogs or venomous snakes.

I knew that Stimson had safely run the gauntlet, although I had not seen him since his first shout to drag the skulkers from the wood. His trick had succeeded, for we had not only seen the strength of our opponents but had materially lessened it. Of the three men downed by my volley from the trench, one still lay where he fell, the others, wounded, having made back to the shelter of trees. In all twelve men had come out of the grove at Stimson's call, half of whom were armed only with stabbing spears and machetes, and one was dead, three seriously wounded, and as many more injured.

As though I had seen it, I knew how Stimson had escaped, diving and ducking, swimming under water as he had the day he captured the ducks. Now he was hidden somewhere along the shore, perhaps in Bamboo Swamp, and he had a revolver and plenty of cartridges. He was a flanking army, able to carry the attack to the enemy's camp, while they were still questioning how many defenders there might be at the cabin trench. Three guns had met their charge; would they guess that one boy had fired them all?

I wondered how well we had deceived them as I reloaded musket and shotgun and rearranged the firing cords. Then I crept into the cabin and found food and a cup of coffee. Rags, tied to a leg of my bunk, greeted me joyfully, and I brought him back to keep me company in the trench. It promised to be a lonely afternoon.



CHAPTER XXIII

BLACK PRINCE

SO far as I could judge in my peep-hole surveys about the hut that afternoon, I had the safest place on the island, and when a band of marmosets took position in the branches of the grove's fringe where the outlaws had been, gamboling and chattering together, I knew that the enemy had retreated elsewhere. Rags received lesson number two, kindergarten department, in recognizing why a stick was thrown by me to the other end of the trench, and what was his connection with the affair.

I built up the fire at supper time, hoping that the captain would return for the meal, but there was no sign of him and Rags and I ate our poi and fruit together. When sunset came I began to worry; I was not so sure that Stimson had escaped that fusillade on the lake, that his second cry was a decoy, not of real

dismay. Night shadows were beginning to have a sinister aspect, the friendly monkeys had stopped their calls, the birds were at rest. Rags, filled with food, went to sleep in his old place in my blouse, leaving me to my thoughts and worriments.

Stimson's philosophy of life excluded worrying. Many a time he had told me that three-fourths of the ills of life were merely regrets over what was past and anxiety over the future, neither of which might be bettered by worrying. I knew that I was gaining nothing sitting there in the gathering darkness giving my fears free rein to picture catastrophes that only might have happened. Stimson had not been wounded, for the turbaned bandit would never have headed a chase along the shore to kill him if the captain was not making good his escape. Stimson had told me distinctly not to worry if he was still away at dark; he would be carrying out his mission, protecting us from the enemy. Still, knowing all this, I worried, nor could I get my mind away from its thoughts of trouble.

The night settled down dark and starless, for a high fog had drifted in and it was useless attempting surveys through the peek-holes or even over the barriers. I could see no farther than the end of my rifle. If any one wanted to creep up on me, he would meet no opposition except the impalpable blackness. To my ears alone was left the cabin's protection, and I listened with an acuteness which made the crackle of a twig

seem a rifle shot. And, listening, I heard the tramp of the approaching galapagos, as I had heard them before, the sound coming to me through the earth and approaching from the end of the lake by the bamboo swamp.

I knew at once what the sound was, but it gave me the same impression of marching men that I once believed it, the steady, heavy tread of a large band of men, keeping perfect time. It came nearer, and I was glad of the darkness that I might not again see the grotesque forms, the snake-like, craning heads and necks, the ugly deformities that served for legs. They would pass near the cabin, judging from the sound, between it and the grove.

They were close enough so that their footsteps were individually distinguishable when I noticed another sound I had not heard before, the clatter of metal as though of swords or rifles striking buckles. In the instant my whole idea was changed; these were marching soldiers, not the mastodon tortoises. My hands clutched the rifle and my eyes tried to pierce the veiling blackness, tried vainly until they ached and throbbed. Out there, marching past the hut, were trained men at arms; were they friends or enemies?

A firm, strong voice gave an order. It was in Spanish, but there was the unmistakable commanding tone of the military leader. A minute later, a crashing in the brush told me that the force had entered the grove, and a series of commands rang out, following one on

the other, as the footsteps died away in the distance. Whoever they were, allies or foes, they had disappeared in the forest.

"Bob?" It was Stimson's voice close beside me, and I answered it with a glad cry as he sprang into the trench and caught me in his arms. "All safe enough now, Bobbie lad," he said, hugging me against him so hard that Rags whined a protest. "There will be no more fighting to-night and no worry over our enemies. If they're not through the pass right now, it is only because they can't run fast enough, and they're on their way. Did you hear my army go by?"

"It was you?" I cried.

"I was in command. There were some fifty or more in the company."

"And they—who were they?"

"What! Didn't you recognize your old friends, the galapagos?"

"I did, then didn't. I knew them when they came, then heard the noise of guns and orders given."

"I was both guns and orders. I did the clatter and gave the commands; also, I turned the turtles into the grove and headed them to where our intrusive neighbors were camped. They left before we arrived—left hurriedly, Bob, because they never heard galapagos marching before. I wonder where they thought we found our army."

I laughed long and loudly, more in relief of all my fears than at the humor of attacking with a band of

turtles. Stimson had tried a new trick and it had succeeded. For the present, at least, we were relieved of anxiety and the dread of a night surprise. We could eat and sleep guarded by imaginary sentinels of the tortoise brigade.

I know that my eyes never opened once during the night and that I slept as soundly and dreamed as peacefully as any time in all my life. I awakened only at the captain's call that breakfast was ready, and found that Rags had deserted me for a cocoanut bowl of meat and poi. The sun was high overhead, the grove filled with bird calls and the lake a blue mirror of cloudless skies. The nightmare had passed.

Stimson left for the grove directly after breakfast. "I must make certain that they have all gone," he said. "Keep a good watch, Bob, and remember my signal, two shots as quickly as I can pull trigger. You know what it means."

"I am to get to you as rapidly as I can travel," I answered.

"Correct. I'll leave you the rifle," and he made his way to where the huddled forms still lay on the ground. I guessed what he intended to do, and shouted to him that I would help, but he waved me back. "Leave it to me," he cried. "Stay there and nurse your foot."

I knew he was purposely keeping me from the disagreeable labor of the burial, so took Rags out in front of the house where I could not see him and for the

first time secured results from my training of the puppy. Rags brought back my thrown stick. He would not give it to me, seeming to think he had earned it and it needed worrying and growling over, but he had learned to retrieve it. I forced it from him and made him repeat the trick a number of times.

It was a lazy morning for me. Once in a while I would make a circuit of the cabin, carefully surveying the landscape, but there was no indication of danger. The cow and calf grazed at the edge of the burned space and once I saw Dan, or another horse, far down the lake toward Roaring River. I felt sure it must be Dan, and I was happy to think he had remained on our side of the mountains.

Stimson returned in the early afternoon, and reported that there were no living men in the grove. He had gone as far as the timber grew to the southward and had seen nothing suspicious. "They scampered off clear beyond the peaks," he said, "and I doubt if they have the courage to return."

"But the wounded?" I asked. "Could they go such a distance?"

"There are no wounded left," he answered. "They have gone."

"The turbaned man I hit—he would not be able to walk far," I insisted, for I felt certain that Stimson was concealing something.

"Bob," said Stimson, solemnly, "I have told you

there are no living men out yonder. I am quite sure of that. Leave it alone," and I did not question more. If I had taken human life, I was not to know it.

I told him I had seen Dan, and after dinner we walked down the lake in search of him, I limping along on my crutch, but we went home disappointed. We found his tracks, or those I was certain were his, but he had made off down the creek toward Roaring River. Next morning Stimson set out alone and rode him back before noon. Dan had entered the trap we made for wild horses, eaten the old hay on the trigger and sprung shut the falling gate. He was feeding quite contentedly when Stimson arrived, and seemed glad to be retaken.

A week passed by without other incident of importance. Each morning the captain made a scouting excursion on Dan's back and returned with the word that we were alone in our valley. Each day my foot improved under the healing qualities of the balsam until I finally threw away the crutch, and we hunted in the woods, fished in the lake, attended our cows and poultry, taught Rags new tricks, studied the birds and monkeys in the grove, and lived quite the old life again; but there was a difference. It was the knowledge of danger, the fear of sudden attack, the dread of a separation, and this difference spoiled the pleasure and happiness of our farm on Lake Plentiful.

When Stimson was away, I waited his return in fear and anxiety; each excursion with him was spoiled by

the necessity of caution and ceaseless watch; the nights were rounds of sentry duty. We dared not swim together in the lake, but one must stay on the shore, rifle in hand, and watch. Any disturbance of the birds or the cessation of the monkeys' chatter would send us scurrying for the trench. I tried to keep my feelings to myself for I did not wish Stimson to know I was unhappy or that my cowardice was clouding the sunshine of these summer days for me; was changing our orchard into a lurking place and ambush for assassins, making our home a fortified trench. I tried to keep the captain from seeing that I was afraid each minute he was away that he might never return and that my sleep was broken with the expectation of musket shots from the night.

It was a Sunday evening and we had returned from a quiet walk up the lake shore to the edge of Bamboo Swamp and back through the grove. Although nothing had been said by either of us, I knew it was a scouting expedition disguised as a Sabbath stroll. It had been our custom always on the afternoon of Sunday, and to me one of the great pleasures of the week, for bird or beast was that day safe from our guns and the fish had sanctuary in lake and stream.

As we entered the door of the cabin, putting the guns we had carried in their new places within reach of our hands, Stimson placed an arm over my shoulder, drawing me close to his side. "We can't go on this way, Bobbin, lad," he said gently. "Sit here

beside me and let's talk it all out. You are not happy; I can see that. It is the anxiety, is it not?"

"Yes, Captain, I am scared. I am like the pheasant I wounded—you remember? Back on the moors? It hid from our search in the grass, but it must have kept peeking out, frightened and lamed, expecting me to shoot again each minute, till it died."

The captain shook his head gravely. "Get that thought out of your mind, Bob, and quickly. You shot the pheasant in the necessity for food and we made search for it carefully. Whether it died from the wound or, as is more likely, recovered and flew away, no blame rests on you and such thoughts as you harbor are unhealthy. A regret cherished unduly is a wrong to yourself. Forget it."

"I think it is because I feel we are in the same situation that I remember," I explained.

"Yes, you are making yourself ill, Bob, over the anxieties of to-morrow. It is true something may happen to-morrow, but so long as we have done to-day all possible to prevent to-morrow's ill, let's not worry about it. I am not going to talk with you of yesterday's regrets or of to-morrow's anxieties, but of to-day's necessities. Your wound has healed, Bob?"

"Yes," I answered, wondering at this sudden change in the conversation.

"Do you see that peak off there?" Stimson pointed through the window to the highest point on the island, a mountain to the southeast that reached more than

a half mile into the skies. "We're going to climb to the top of it, Bob, and find out the why and wherefore of our intruders. From there we should see over the whole southern half of the island, and its east coast will be at our feet. I have waited for you to get strong enough to make the journey."

"I am ready now, Captain."

"Then we start to-night. There will be a new moon to help us on the way. Come along; we'll get ready;" and we began selection of what to take and leave.

It was nine o'clock and a slim, crescent moon was midway to the zenith when we closed the door of our cabin and led Dan, with a neatly balanced pack, and with Rags in one pannier, down the shore of the lake. I turned more than once to look back at our little hut with the stone chimney against its side, the long leaves of nipa straggling over the eaves. I do not believe I could have borne to leave it had I known that it was for the last time, for it had been the home of happiness as well as battle and bloodshed.

We turned south and began the climb at Roaring River. We were traveling light, carrying nothing but the rifle and Stimson's revolver, the other guns and all the ammunition remaining being a part of Dan's pack. Even then it was slow going, for the ascent was steep and détours necessary to get Dan up. We passed the place where we had shot the dogs and just before dawn made camp in a little nook close beside the tumbling waters of the river. Dan was picketed, after the pack

had been removed, and there was good grazing for him.

We stayed there that day, not venturing from the dell, and it was after nightfall when we resumed the journey. Each hour the climbing became more difficult and the river smaller, and it was still dark when we came to the spring which was its beginning. We were high up in the mountain but still far from its summit, as Stimson assured me.

Supper—for we were turning the day around and night was our day—was made as before without a fire and we rolled into our blankets and close together, for the heights were not equatorial, especially at night. Stimson was off into slumber almost as soon as he laid head to earth, but I couldn't sleep. Trying to by counting imaginary sheep coming from a corral I heard Dan whinny softly.

It was the same pleased little neigh with which he greeted Stimson when he came to him mornings, or me if I brought him food. It was a greeting, and instantly I left dream sheep to wonder what had caused Dan to begin talking. He was picketed some distance from our sleeping place, but I could hear him moving about and again he neighed.

I awoke Stimson, which was obeying orders. Anything unusual, no matter how trivial, was reason enough to arouse him. His quick, quiet, " What is it, Bob ? " was answered by a whispered explanation.

Stimson lay silent waiting. Dan whinnied softly

and we heard the thud of hoofs on earth at a trot. Stimson leaped to his feet, starting forward into the dark, then stopped. He had heard Dan neigh again, and Dan was where he should have been, at the end of a tether rope.

"He's having callers," whispered the captain, sitting beside me. "Creep to the pack, Bob, and get my hide lariat—quiet as a mouse! If the visitors stay for breakfast I'll get one to remain for keeps."

I noiselessly brought him the rope and, cautioning me to wait, he glided toward Dan, disappearing immediately from my sight. I did wait for seeming hours, hearing the murmurs of the horses, the beat of their hoofs but no sound of Stimson. Then the sun came up, almost startling me, so quickly did it change night into day, and instantly there was commotion. There were loud snorts and neighing protests, a small thunder of hoofs, and Stimson's call to me to bring the hobbles. Anticipating the sun, the captain had been ready to hurl noose over the neck of one of Dan's early callers, and when I arrived at the scene of action he was on Dan's back making our horse help him in the subjugation of the black stallion.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BATTLE IN THE GULCH

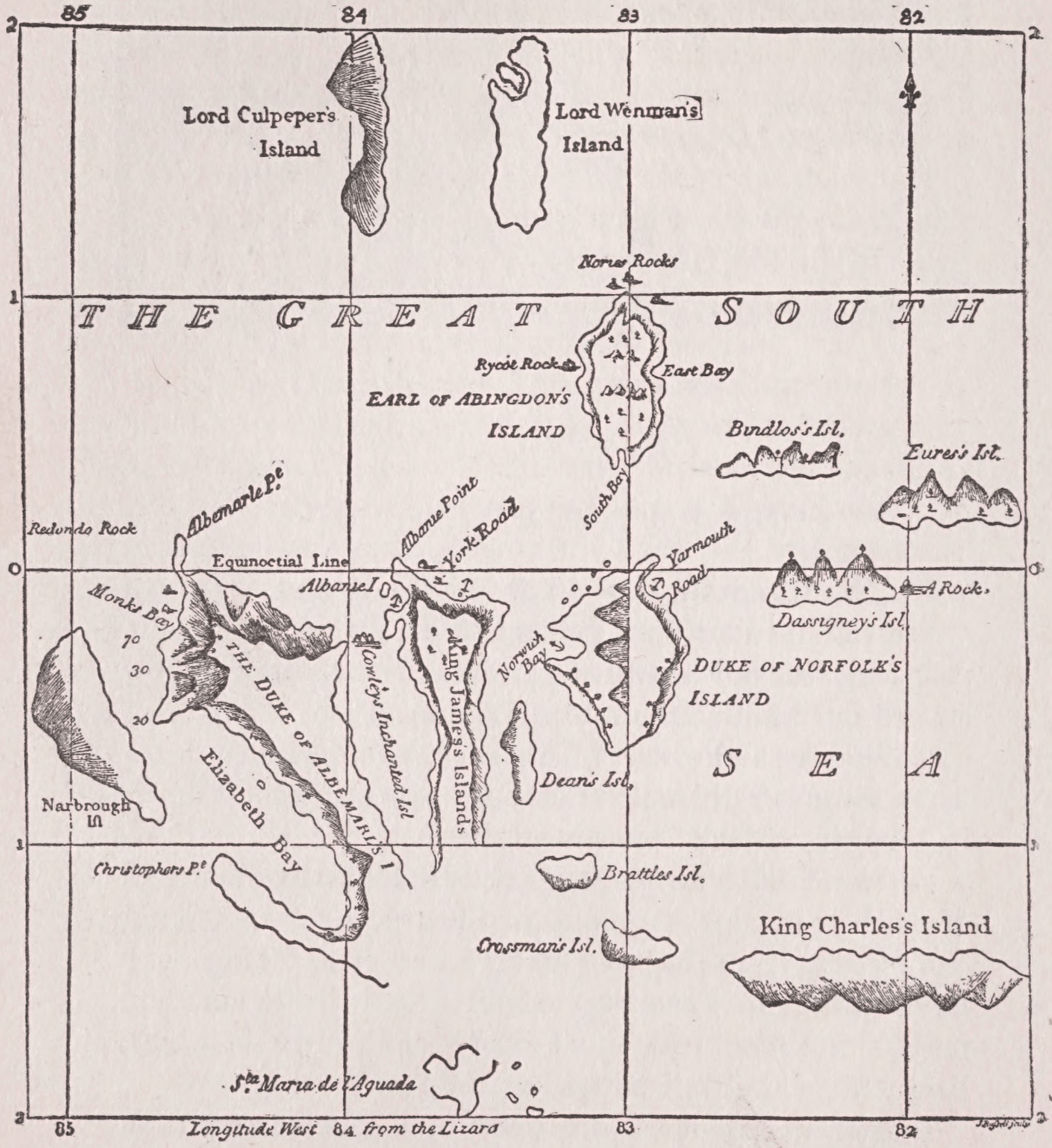
"I AM wondering whether Black Prince is worth what he cost," said Stimson late that afternoon, referring to our latest addition to the family, now staked out beside Dan and quietly feeding.

"What was the cost?" I asked, wonderingly, for I knew Stimson did not refer to the work of many hours in breaking Black Prince to ride.

"I can't tell yet. For his sake I took the chance of discovery of our expedition by the outlaws. That chance was the price we pay for our horse. They may have seen me cavorting about the hillside on him, maybe not; but we must move cautiously to-night, Bob. We shouldn't be taking chances."

I thought Black Prince was worth greater risk than seemed probable had been taken, but I did not say so,

Castaway Island



HUGH LIBORGES' MAP OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

(*See page 6*)

for the captain spoke earnestly and was studying the landscape with the glass in an anxious carefulness. We had slept not at all during the day, and now he prepared to move forward without waiting for night. Water bags were filled at the spring, Dan was packed, and after eating a hearty meal of cold provisions and the last of our fresh fruit, we started the final stage of the climb to the mountain top, Rags chasing happily beside us. Stimson had promised we should see the sunrise from the summit, and even with Black Prince's many obstinacies and refusals to accept the captain's guidance, we came out upon the hog-back that marked the last half mile of rise just as the sun, for the first time in our personal knowledge and view since we came to the island, rose up out of the sea.

We stopped at once and gazed across the ocean eastward. Near by, a little to the south, not a score of miles away, lay another island even larger, I thought, than the one we were on; certainly its mountains were taller, for clouds hung about the peaks of the loftiest. The captain with the glass found other islands farther away, two at least, perhaps a third, though it might be a cloud bank or fog.

"We have at last begun to learn something of our surroundings," he said, handing me the binoculars. "We are not so isolated as I feared, and it will be easy for us to make that nearest island."

I studied it with the glasses. "There is smoke rising from it—see?" and I pointed to where a thin wisp

of straw-colored fumes rose above the mountains. Stimson eagerly adjusted the glasses I handed him.

"A volcano, Bob," he said finally. "No, there is no sign of human life visible there. But come along, lad, and we'll get a view of our own unknown land. We can see to the south from the peak."

We hastened on to the summit and, turning its rock-piled crest, had the whole southern part of the island at our feet. Here the mountain fell away almost precipitously for a thousand feet and the coast line stretched from east to west, the half circle of our vision. To the direct east, the mountains ran down to the sea, but farther south sloped gradually to sand-dunes, shining like silver in the morning sun. There was a bay at our southeastern corner, with two little islets of sand at its point, and almost against the bay was a great lagoon, many miles long. "That is our river," explained Stimson, pointing it out. "It has been dammed by the sand and makes that big lake."

"But wouldn't the river carry out the sand and clear its course?" I asked.

"The waves of the ocean now are stronger than the river's current, but there is a perpetual battle between them. In the rainy season the river wins, for its swollen waters clear the ocean sands away and it runs free. Then there is no lake there, just a narrow river bottom. Now the sea is the victor."

"It was in the lagoon you found the mussels?" I asked, and Stimson nodded. He was looking over the

moor we had once crossed so painfully to find the river, studying it with his glasses.

"They are not there," he said.

"The pirates?"

He laughed. "If you want to call them that. I hoped to find them somewhere out there between Ostrich Bay and Point Pillar, but they're not along South River."

"How can you be sure?" I asked, for there were many hiding places for more men than were of our enemies.

"See? Yonder is a herd of cattle feeding. Nearer the river, a band of horses. You remember how they disappeared before our approach, Bob?"

"We saw only their dust," I answered.

"They would not be quiet with a body of men on the moors. Your pirates are not along South River, Bobbin."

"Then where?"

"I'm afraid they're behind us."

"On Roaring River?"

"At Lake Plentiful." I turned to him quickly with a cry of dismay. "I was afraid of it, Bobbin," Stimson continued, "and that's the real reason we are not in our cabin at Lake Plentiful now. We could not expect our trick to be permanent in its fright. These are men, and they would ask themselves why the soldiery, for that is what they believed the galapagos to be, did not follow up the attack, trail them down.

Then they would take measures to find out. Spies have reported that we were alone at the hut. It may be known that we have come here, and it is possible that we were followed."

"Then we are not going back, Captain?" I asked the question sadly. Even with its trenches and burned pasture, it was still home to me.

"We will make our home where they are not," he answered, cheerfully enough. "Between the lagoon, the river and Ostrich Bay is territory enough for us to wander on our horses, and it holds game, fish, oysters and mussels—sufficient food. Besides, pearls." He added the last word with a laugh.

As we could not camp there on the summit for its rocky bleakness, we retraced our way back to the timber line and found pasturage for the horses; then I made up for lost sleep. Stimson had said nothing to me of keeping watch, and as we had not done so any previous time on the journey, it never entered my head that we should take turn about. He dozed and watched, alternately, during the day.

We left at dark, headed westward over the mountain ridge that separated us from South River canyon, and after some hard traveling reached a gradually sloping hillside resembling the moors beyond the river. Here our progress was rapid, for we could ride the horses. Dan's load had been so much reduced through our healthy appetites that my added weight upon his back was no discomfort, and Stimson, with Rags in his shirt,

rode Black Prince. It was midnight when we splashed through the stream and went into camp on its western side.

The next morning we made up the river, passing the place where we had camped before when I found Rags, going over familiar ground most of the way. Stimson was hunting for a valley beside the stream, a widening of its narrow canyon that he had noted before, an ideal place for our new home, concealed amid crags but covered with good pasturage and sufficient shade.

We came to it finally, entering it from below, climbing up the river bottom, and as though to signal our arrival, a musket shot rang out, sending the horses into wild dancing and my heart into my throat. "Dismount!" cried Stimson, the order ringing out sharp as though to a troop of cavalry. I leaped from Dan, hanging by the bridle reins, and I ran to where Stimson was sitting the plunging Black Prince, the rifle at a ready, and his keen eyes searching the glade.

"Get down—please, Captain," I pleaded, and he leaped to my side.

"Go back with the horses," he commanded, handing me Black Prince's rope. "Tether them in the thicket below, then creep back to me."

I made as rapid time as I could, but the black was frightened and stubborn. Twice I heard Stimson's rifle crack and a number of scattered shots in answer. I was sure that we had run directly into the bandits' lair; that the captain had guessed wrong.

He was behind a rock aiming at something up the valley I could not see when I crept up. He fired, then lowered the rifle to greet me with a smile. "Horses all right?" he asked.

"Scared, but safely tied," I answered. "Have we run into their camp?"

"No; they were on their way to meet us, but didn't expect us to move so rapidly. We have given them the surprise they expected to give us. But there are more men now, Bob."

"More?"

"They have reinforcements again. Where they spring from I can't guess, but ——"

Crack! A rifle spoke from the hill at our side, and Stimson dropped his Mauser and grabbed at his shoulder. "Jiminetty! that is our old friend again," he grunted, pressing me around a corner of rock out of range. "That rifle sounds and shoots familiar."

"You are hit?"

"Shoulder here. Rip off my shirt and strip it into bandages, quickly, Bob! Cut it away with your knife —but keep down!—keep down! That man can shoot!"

I had a pad over the wound and a bandage holding it tight in a few minutes, but twice we shifted positions to dodge the marksman. "We must get back to the horses," said Stimson, handing me the rifle and pulling his revolver from its holster. "I can use this with my left hand, but I am no one-handed rifle shot. Bob, see if you can clear that sharpshooter from our way."

Another bullet spit in, nearly wrenching the gun from my hands, for it had clipped the butt, ricocheting with an angry buzz. We shifted hastily, but I had seen the smoke of the discharge. The man was behind a tree on the side hill overlooking the canyon. I watched that tree, the rifle ready to fire.

"Praise be,—the shadows are lengthening!" exclaimed Stimson, earnestly. "Night will be down on us in an hour if we can hold out."

I made no reply, for I had my eyes on the tree where I knew the marksman was concealed, nor did I shift them when Stimson's revolver began to talk. The man saw his opportunity in the new attack to secure position and he glided from concealment. I was ready, gun at my shoulder, and I fired the moment he came into view. With the crack of my rifle he tumbled and, rocks and dirt giving way, he crashed through the brush down the steep slope. Almost to our rock he rolled with the impetus of his fall and he lay all crumpled up on the ground before me. A wild howl came from the other side of the canyon, shots were fired and Stimson's pistol answered sharply.

"It sounded as though you landed, Bob," called Stimson through the powder fumes. "All well with you?"

"Yes, Captain. He fell into the gulch, and he's American!"

"U. S., is he? I thought he might be from his shooting. Wait—I'm coming," and he crawled to my

side. From behind the rock he peered out at the fallen man.

The figure moved, first an arm, then raised his head slowly and painfully and looked back at Stimson. I was watching, and I saw an almost grotesque look of amazement come into the swarthy face.

"Merton?" cried Stimson, sharply. The man brought up his hand to salute, then fell back with a groan.

"Help me, Bob," and Stimson was at the fallen man's side. Together we brought him back behind our rocky barrier and the captain was holding the water bag to his lips. There was a blotch of red on the shirt over his right breast. "One of my men, Bob,—of the Tatterdemalions," explained Stimson, bandaging the wound. "He killed a tentmate in a drunken row, was sentenced as a convict. How came he here?"

"Will he ever be able to tell us?" I asked, anxiously.

"The wound is not necessarily fatal. If we can get him out of here we may save his life."

Again Merton opened his eyes in consciousness and the captain gave him water. "Colonel," he whispered, "I didn't know—never guessed ——"

"All right, Merton," Stimson interrupted. "How are you now?"

"All in, Colonel. I'm going—going out soon ——"

"Bosh! That hole in you is nothing. I'll fix you up as good as ever. Don't play the baby."

"No use, Colonel. I was half dead when I got this.

Nothing left to pull from. It's killed me—over there ——" he waved an arm toward the east.

"Over where?" asked Stimson, quickly.

"Chatham Island—the convict settlement,—where I was sent after—you know." There was a long pause, and Merton's eyes were closed. I thought he had died, but Stimson still held up his head. Then he spoke again, his voice lowered, his eyes still shut.

"We mutinied—did for our guards—captured the schooner and escaped. Some of us came here, for we knew there was fruit and food here; the rest tried to make Mexico with the boat. We found you here and we had to get you—only I didn't guess who you were. I ——"

"How came the fruit here? the horses, cows?" Stimson questioned eagerly.

"Used to be a settlement back in the '30s; Floreana, they called it. They gave it up, but that's the why of the trees and animals. Will you say good-bye, Colonel?"

"Good-bye, Merton. It's a hard end."

"To a hard life and a bad life. I got what's coming, and there's no blame to any but me. Will you shake my hand, Colonel?"

Stimson motioned me and I took Merton's head in my arms while Stimson grasped the dying man's hand with his left. "The other isn't working just now," he explained, grimly.

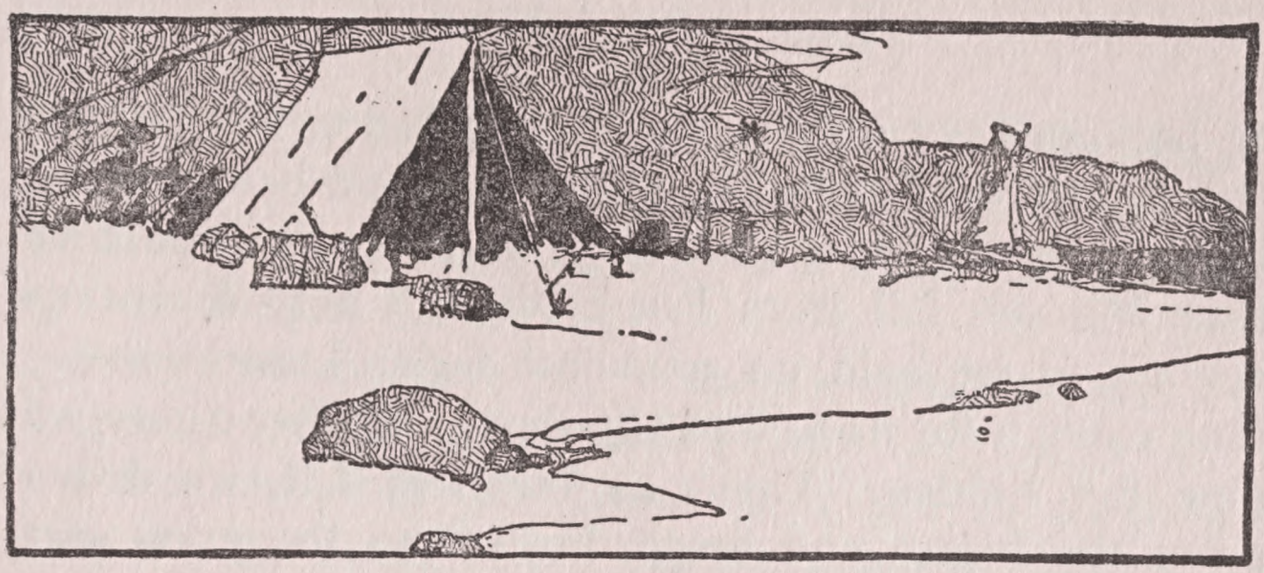
"Did I get ye, Colonel?" asked Merton, his lips spreading into a smile.

"You always could shoot," the captain answered, and he held the hand firmly. For a long time Merton lay passive, seemingly unconscious, then his lips moved and Stimson bent down to hear.

"Watch 'em, Colonel," he whispered faintly. "They're just plain brutes. They'll kill ye if they can. And cowards." His head was heavy in my arms. "Twoscore or more of 'em," he breathed; "but if you can—can signal—to the ——" Words stopped.

"Signal who?" cried Stimson, eagerly, anxiously. There was no reply, could be no reply; Merton was dead.

Night had fallen and the tropic stars shone down on the stark form of Stimson's black-sheep Tatterdemalion, dead in a lonely gulch on a lonely isle, a smile still on his lips, for his captain had held his hand in the dark valley; and there we left him, creeping away through the shadows, dodging from rock to tree, hiding in the thickets and behind the bank of the stream, back to Black Prince and Dan; and a few minutes later we were sending the horses, only too willing to fly, up the side of the canyon in zigzag ascent. Once at the top, Black Prince led the way at a gallop and I followed on Dan, straight westward across the moor. From the scrub at the edge of the stream came shots and cries, but I neither looked behind nor raised the rifle, and we were beyond the range of muskets in a minute.



CHAPTER XXV

CONCLUSION

IT was forty-eight hours later, and Stimson and I, weary, weak and feverish of thirst and hunger, lay hidden in a hollow of the moor. Rags was asleep beside me, whining softly now and then, but Dan and Black Prince had been sent back to their mates in the hills, driven away to save their lives. We were being hunted like animals by men more cruel than beasts, and there was no ammunition left for the revolver, and but a few cartridges for the rifle.

Stimson had fought hard and long and, while he could sit a horse, none of the enemy had dared close in on us or get within range of his Mauser; but he was no longer able to ride or shoot. The wound was such that we could not bind it properly, and loss of blood had drained his strength. We had run into the convicts twice during the first night, either by chance

or because they outguessed us, heading us off, and all the day we were standing off pursuers and being forced in a circle that was gradually narrowing. The first time Stimson fell from Black Prince I helped him up again, and he held on somehow for an hour or more, long enough for us to find the slender shelter where we now lay hidden. Then, as darkness fell, we drove away the horses and crept down into the grass and tangle of the hollow.

It was on the hillside which overlooked Ostrich Bay and there was hardly a tree upon it for miles; just grass, sage and cacti. In the morning the convicts would track us to this hiding place, without a doubt, and I should make our last stand alone, for Stimson was not able to hold a gun, and his revolver was useless; the musket had somehow been lost, left behind with our packs, most probably.

I counted the remaining cartridges, feeling them in the dark; there were twelve. There were powder and shot for the gun, but the shot was small for killing birds and game. It would hold off close attack for a time, but was no match for the muskets opposed to us.

Stimson was asleep or in a stupor beside me; Rags, snuggling close to my breast, whined softly with thirst and hunger; I lay on my back and stared at the stars. The great adventure was over. We had fought and lost. Our island—ours no longer—would to-morrow see the end. Well, I had lived for a time, and in that

living had learned a reliance and confidence that taught me how to die. I would not tremble with fear when the hour came. I had learned from a man how to live or how to meet life's end.

I reached my hand to Stimson's beside me, and his fingers closed over mine; and I slept.

I was counting the strokes of a bell in my sleep: ding, ding; ding, ding; we were on the "Sally B," sailing away across peaceful seas to a blue-white light. Ding, ding; ding, ding; eight bells. Before they had ceased, I was counting them awake. "Eight bells!" I said aloud.

Stimson stirred and spoke. "What is it, Bob?" he asked weakly.

"Eight bells," I replied, and the wonder of it came to my waking realization. "Eight bells, Captain!" I repeated, springing to my feet. "Did you hear? A ship's bell—out yonder at sea!"

"You are dreaming, Bobbin. Lie down, lad."

"I heard a ship's bell," I cried. "I am not dreaming—I heard—I heard! Captain, there is a ship—I know! What is the time—your watch?"

He sat up now, for my certainty was convincing, and I held a match while he pulled out his watch. It was a minute after twelve. "Odd," he said, looking at it even after the match had burned out. "It *is* eight bells, Bob!"

"I heard it, Captain. Just as sure as I'm awake now, I heard a ship's bell. At first it was in my sleep,

but I woke up while it still rang. I am going to see—to find the ship!"

"Wait, Bob; a half hour will decide it with certainty. Sit here, and if the bell rings again, we shall go together."

That half hour seemed four hours long. We looked at the watch a dozen times, held it to our ears to be sure it had not stopped. When it was a few minutes of the time we stood up, my arm about the captain, so that we might hear more distinctly. Would it come, clear and resonant through the still air, or must I go back into hiding with its certainties of the morrow, admitting I had dreamed?

"Ding!" One bell.

Stimson strengthened instantly. "Saved, Bobbin lad!" he cried, and his left arm clasped me tight against him. "She's in the bay—Ostrich Bay! Come on!" and we struggled up the tangled side of the hollow, I leading and helping him.

"The light! The white light!" I cried as I topped the rise. There, down the long slope, closer and bigger than it had ever been before, was the blue-white flame. From it, striking the sea before it, was a fan-like glow that made a circle upon the black, night water.

"She's on our oyster beds, Captain!" I cried, but he was running, staggering, down the declivity.

"Come on, Bob!" he shouted back to me. "Beat me if you can, but run for it!"

Behind us, far away and indistinct, I heard musket

shots, but I only laughed as I caught up with Stimson, running at his side. "They're shooting at the stars," I said. "Take my arm, Captain."

"If I need—later, perhaps. Keep going."

It was still a mile ahead to the beach of the cove and the moor was not easy running, even in daylight. We stumbled time and again, and I was soon aiding Stimson with an arm about him and his left across my shoulder. Finally we staggered down the last hill to the beach and I sent a hail across the water to a schooner which lay, sails all snugged, in the cove.

The answer came back in English: "Ahoy there! Who are ye?"

Stimson had recovered his breath. "Send in a boat for us," he shouted.

The great search-light swung around slowly until it picked us up and it rested on us. I heard the voices of men in discussion aboard the vessel, then a voice rang out. "Are ye from Chatham?"

"No. From the good, old United States!" answered Stimson, and a laugh came across the water.

"Get up the divers and pull ashore, Stayne. See who these men are," was the command on the schooner, and the search-light swung back to make a white spot on the water.

Now I saw a small boat in the midst of the circle of light with two men aboard, one of whom worked a crank like a windlass, turning it round and round. Then the surface of the water beside the boat was

broken by the appearance of a steel-cased head with a glass front which reflected the glow. Slowly this strangely clad diver came up from the sea, climbing a ladder that hung from the boat's side. A second diver followed him, and in a minute came the splash of oars and the boat moved toward us, the search-light following it in.

"That is real pearl fishing," said the captain, speaking low. "They know how and have proper equipment."

"Why do they work at night?"

"Less wind, perhaps, or more hours and more shell. The season's short at best. But it explains the light, and I never once thought of it."

"They are taking our pearls," I said mournfully, and Stimson laughed.

"Find out all about 'em before you take 'em aboard," came a command from the schooner, as audible to us as the boatmen.

"You needn't fear," Stimson answered. "I'm down and out with a bullet in my shoulder and the lad's starved and weak with thirst. We couldn't do harm if we were inclined that way."

"Fighting the convicts?" asked the man called Stayne, from the boat.

"Yes. There's a band above ripe for anything, armed with muskets and rifles. You have saved us from them, and just in time."

"Drop them firearms on the beach and walk away

from 'em," Stayne ordered and, as we obeyed, he called back to the schooner, "I guess they're O. K., Captain."

"All right; take them in," came back from the ship.

The boat grated on the beach and Stimson met the two men who came toward us, his left hand outstretched in greeting. "I'm Stimson," he said, "Jeffers Stimson, late of Ecuador, bound home to the U. S.; and this is Robert Trevlin of San Francisco."

Stayne turned and shouted to the schooner. "Hear that, Captain?" he roared.

"Hear what? No."

"Robert Trevlin's one of these beachers."

"Trevlin? Not ——"

"Yes. Robert Trevlin—him with the reward ——"

"Fetch 'em aboard!" shouted the captain.

Stimson smiled at me as we helped him to a seat in the bows. "Seem to be known to them, Bob," he said.

"What does it mean?" I asked, but Stayne answered the question with another.

"Be you the millionaire Trevlin boy as was lost in Guayaquil some six months ago?" he asked.

"Yes—I guess so," I answered, not daring to look at Stimson. Why had I not told him when I had a chance? How would he feel to me now, knowing I had deceived him by silence?

"I guess you'll be very welcome aboard the 'Mariana,'" continued the fisherman. "They's a handsome

reward for any information of you, and it doubles if you're found. We all greet you fondly, Mister Trevlin."

I made no answer, for we were against the schooner's side and scrambled over its rail. That ship's captain —Stubbs was his name, we found—had loads of common sense, for he greeted us with dippers of water, not hand-shakes, and he had us inside his cabin before a tableful of food before he began to ask questions. While he listened to our story, he patched up Stimson's wound, making better surgery of it than I had been able to do, and gave much more reassurance as to its condition. "A clean cut, in and out again," he declared. "No bones broken and no complications to fear."

We arranged without difficulty for passage on the "Mariana." The schooner had been working the beds of a little atoll that lay about twenty miles southwest of our island, so close to the water that we had not been able to see it even with the binoculars. In the lagoon of this circular strip of coral the "Mariana" had been anchored each time we had seen the light, making frequent trips to Guayaquil for supplies and to dispose of the shell and pearls. Night work was her specialty, for the winds were usually dead at night and the search-light gave a luminosity which penetrated to the bottom even in deep water. It was this great electric light that had caused us to wonder at its mystery and talk of "Flying Dutchmen" and St. Elmo's lights.

Captain Stubbs declared I was more valuable cargo

than all the pearls he had gathered on his cruise and offered to make the run direct to San Francisco. "I don't want to divide the reward with any of these Ecuadoran officials," he explained. "I'll put the lad into his uncle's hands in Frisco, and no splits with any one. It may sound selfish, Stimson, but we pearl divers are not in business for our health."

"You needn't apologize," Stimson answered. "We're both able to pay our way," and he gave me a smile which cheered me. Apart from what was waiting for me in San Francisco we were not poor, with a black pearl and a Chinese Buddha.

Captain Stubbs turned his cabin over to us, disregarding our protests, and bunked in with the mate. As he was leaving, Stimson asked what would be done about the convicts escaped from Chatham Island, and Stubbs said he would report it at San Francisco through the Ecuadoran consulate there. When he had closed the door behind him, Stimson, comfortable in the lower berth, spoke to me. "So, Bobbin, you had no need to work in the stoke-hole or before the mast to earn passage up?" he asked, and his eyes were smiling.

"I—I'm afraid I didn't, Captain. I—I ——"

"You just wanted a friend; wasn't it that, lad?" I nodded. "You wanted some one you liked and who liked you, just as I did like you the minute I saw you, and you didn't care a bit whether he was rich or poor, prince or pauper. You might have hired the whole cabin deck of the 'Mariposa,' but you preferred

the fo'castle of the 'Sally B' and a friend. Bob, give my bad right hand a shake; I'm willing to stand the pain for the sake of such a friendship."

I didn't see just how he had twisted it around that way, making me the one who had given, when all I had done was to receive friendship and accept gratefully, but I squeezed his hand gently, glad that he held no blame for my silent acquiescence of his mistake. When I was settled in my bunk with Rags curled up in a fat little ball at my feet, I spoke of another matter. Outside I could hear the groaning capstan jerking the anchor from the mud; gruff orders and responses and the scuffling feet of the crew hurrying sails on spars and booms; and I knew that when my eyes opened from coming slumber we should be bowling northward, homeward.

"Captain," I said eagerly, "we shall go back some day—back to our island together—to Lake Plentiful and the bamboo cabin, the grove and the palms, to Black Prince and Dan, who will be waiting for us—and the cows and chickens. You will go with me, Captain?"

"Some day—yes, Bob; God willing."

"And Rags shall watch for us then. He can bring back sticks already, Captain! He's going to be a grand watch-dog, is Rags!"

Hearing his name, Rags cocked an ear, opened an eye and whined happily.

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